

Stories that remain relevant

MANY SURVIVORS OF THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST chose Uruguay as the destination to rebuild their lives. One of them was Charlotte de Grünberg, current Director General of Universidad ORT Uruguay.

The novel "The girl who watched the trains depart", written by Ruperto Long, portrays four stories, one of them follows the life of Charlotte, an eight-year-old Belgian girl who flees persecution together with her family and recounts her trials and tribulations.

The author met the protagonist at a reception held at Universidad ORT Uruguay where she gave him a brief overview of her life story. This inspired him to create a story contrasting events in World War II with the present day, inviting readers to reflect and raise their awareness. Initially, she turned down the idea of having her story told, but a few months later she agreed.

In the book, the life of Charlotte is intertwined with that of Domingo López Delgado, a Uruguayan soldier who enlisted as a volunteer to fight in the war, as well as other real and fictional characters. At the end, the epilogue recounts the fate of the real people who appear in the story.

The presentation took place on 7 April in the Delmira Augustini room of the Teatro Solis and the main speaker was Uruguayan writer Hugo Burel who pointed out that the persecution of Jews continues to the present day with the recent murder of business owner David Fremd, comparing Hitler to ISIS. "Another of the merits of the book is to hold up an unflinching mirror that reflects the past to warn us about the present. Yesterday it was Hitler. Today it is ISIS and their madness that threatens anyone who thinks differently to their deranged political and religious views", he added. Subsequently Mr. Ruperto Long –the author- spoke. Charlotte de Grünberg closed with a few reflections about the ever present danger of racism and anti-Semitism.

A book trailer for the novel was shown and finally Alberto Magnone and Lea Ben Sassón performed three songs, "Jerusalem of Gold", "The Eucalyptus Tree" and "Libertango" (with lyrics by Horacio Ferrer).

The presentation at the Teatro Solis was also attended by the Ambassador of Israel Nina Ben-Ami, the Rector of Universidad ORT Uruguay Jorge Grünberg (son of Charlotte), the Rector of Universidad Católica Father Eduardo Casarotti, former Uruguayan Presidents Luis Alberto Lacalle and Julio María Sanguinetti, National Party senators Luis Alberto Lacalle Pou and Luis Alberto Heber, Mariano Arana former Mayor of Montevideo, Leonardo Guzman, former Education Minister, Sergio Gorzy, President of the Board of Deputies of the Jewish Community, Norma Werthein, former President of ORT Argentina, Christophe Dessaux, Consul of France, Ben-Tzion Spitz, Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Uruguay, and other authorities from state-run institutions, ORT Uruguay University and private university system.

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