



Universala Esperanto-Asocio

Holocaust Remembrance Day 2022: Message of the Universal Esperanto Association

On January 27 each year, the United Nations observes Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is a day of mourning for the millions who lost their lives, and a day of celebration of those brave individuals who helped save the lives of others who would have perished. The Universal Esperanto Association mourns most particularly the thousands of Esperanto speakers who died – including the members of the family of Ludwik Lazarus Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto.

Zamenhof's daughter Lidia was murdered in 1942 in the Treblinka death camp. To mark the 80th anniversary of her death, UEA will hold during 2022 various activities in honour of the "daughter of Esperanto". Lidia Zamenhof was active internationally in spreading her father's language and ideas, especially "Homaranismo", Zamenhof's ideology of humanist universalism. She was also active in the Bahá'í faith, which at the time supported Esperanto as an international language. Nazi Germany persecuted Esperanto both because its creator was Jewish and also because of the global and human rights ideals of the Esperanto movement. During a stay in the USA to propagate both the language and her faith, Lidia's application to extend her visa was refused by the US immigration authorities and she was obliged to return to Poland. Soon thereafter, following the invasion of Poland in September 1939, Lidia was accused of spreading anti-Nazi propaganda in the US and arrested.

Almost all living members of Zamenhof's family fell victim to the Nazi persecution. His son Adam was arrested and, early in 1940, shot; in 1942 his daughters Zofia and Lidia were murdered in Treblinka, along with his sister Ida. Only Adam's son, Ludwik, miraculously survived, thanks not only to his own ingenuity but also to the protection afforded him and his mother by Father Marcelli Godlewski, of the Parish of All Saints in Grzybowski Square, Warsaw. Father Godlewski, and others like him, thus helped keep alive the hope that is contained in the very name of Esperanto.

The Esperanto movement mourns particularly those believers in internationalism and international understanding who, either because of their race or physical condition or because of their political or social convictions, perished at the hands of the Nazis. They included numerous speakers of Esperanto in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. They were civil servants, teachers, doctors, journalists, working people – individuals from all walks of life. And among the survivors were also Esperantist heroes who shielded others from extermination.

We remember those victims who did not or could not stand up to this tyranny and butchery and also those who resisted; and we pledge, with the example of the Holocaust before us, to do our best to resist injustice wherever and whenever it occurs.