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Giuricin, Rosanna Turcinovich. *In the Maelstrom of History: A Conversation with Miriam.* Arpa d'or, 3. Toronto: Club Giuliano Dalmato di Toronto, 2021. Pp. 103. ISBN 978-1-7778-5442-3 (paperback). \$25.

In these biographical interviews, the author (an Italian journalist) illustrates the suffering of the people who were torn from their homes, forced into exile, or exterminated in concentration camps in the Second World War. It is an important testimony of the horrors of the past and a warning not to repeat them.

Giuricin presents us with the fate of two groups of people. She describes the sufferings of the Giuliano Dalmati, who, when their cities and lands (Fiume, Istria, Dalmatia) were ceded by Italy to Yugoslavia at the end of the war, had to choose between staying in places that had become alien to them or going into exile. Those who chose to go to Italy ended up in refugee camps with a minimal subsidy, had to wait long years for a place to live, had their belongings stolen, or rotted away in the warehouses where they had deposited them.

Giuricin also describes the tragic experiences of Jews who were first persecuted by the Fascists, then by the Nazis. The story of Miriam Grünglas, a Holocaust survivor, exemplifies this. In a series of interviews with Miriam, the author first tells us about her serene, pre-war childhood in Trieste, with her parents, her brother, and two little sisters. Her parents ran two guesthouses, one in Trieste and the other in Grado, where they served kosher food and had the pleasure of receiving Jewish merchants from Europe and America. Miriam enjoyed a happy family life and was proud of her progress in school. Following Mussolini's proclamation of racial laws in 1938, the Grünglas family had to abandon their home and their guesthouses and leave Trieste in 1939. The family was forced to relocate to their ancestral home, the small town of Tyachiv in Czechoslovakia.

In 1944, the Nazis deported Miriam and all the Jews in Tyachiv to Auschwitz. After a long journey in a cattle car, they arrived in Auschwitz where she was separated from her family and later sent to Birkenau, where she was assigned to hard labour. Initially, she had to lift heavy bricks, work that led to a twisted ankle and then a broken hip; then she was sent to a munitions factory in Fallersleben; and finally to the Salzweden concentration camp, which was soon after liberated by the Allies.

Of particular importance is Miriam's friendship with Carlo, an Italian soldier also imprisoned in Fallersleben. He learned that the young girl was weak, hungry, and in dire straits, so he secretly provided her with food and

helped her build her courage. It is touching to learn how Miriam communicated with Carlo in her beautiful, harmonious voice: first she sang songs in Italian, a language the guards did not understand, and then, still singing, she revealed to Carlo that she was a slave of the Nazis.

Once liberated, Miriam went to Prague, where she was welcomed in a centre for survivors and found a doctor who reassembled her hip through a series of operations that allowed her to recover her mobility. Though physically she reacquired her strength, psychologically she was very depressed when she learned that her entire family – her parents, brother, and sisters – were all murdered by the Nazis. Both Italy and Czechoslovakia were now full of painful memories, so after three years Miriam left Prague to start a new life in Toronto. Her decision to go to the New World was due to a letter from relatives in Cleveland, Ohio, whom her parents had tried in vain to contact before the war in the hope to escape to America, and to the fact that Canadian immigration was accepting Jews with no family. In March 1948, she arrived in Toronto where, with the help of the local Jewish community, she gradually recovered her spirits, fell in love, and got married. Miriam became a mother, grandmother, and the matriarch of a large family.

In the interviews Miriam explains that, despite her desire to forget the suffering she has endured, it is important to keep her memories alive in order not to lose her identity and to share her experiences with the community in which she lives. She tells her story to students in Ontario schools who might never have appreciated the depths to which the Nazis sank. Since there are people who deny the Holocaust, or who are indifferent to the events of history, Miriam finds it necessary to tell students what happened during the Second World War so as to prevent these massacres from being repeated. She thinks that only a thorough examination of the past can enable us to understand the history of the twentieth century, with all its horrors, and avoid the danger of future racist ideologies.

Miriam's words are echoed by many of the students who attend her talks. It is the young people who come from Sudan, India, or Pakistan, who have seen wars and racial tensions in their countries, who most identify with her story: they know about racism, religious hatred, and the cruelty of caste differences. Another important aspect of Miriam's volunteer work is to help doctors who have patients who are Holocaust survivors. As they age, many survivors become overwhelmed by painful memories they have tried to forget and sometimes lose touch with reality. In these cases, doctors may ask

Miriam how she would want to be treated if she were in the situation of one of those patients.

This text will be useful to students and colleagues studying twentieth-century Italy, the Holocaust, or, more generally, racism, war, and genocide. The fact that the story is told by a woman who grew up happily in Trieste until her world fell apart in 1938 may make young people relate to Miriam's story on a personal basis.

Like other Holocaust survivors, Miriam has shown steadfastness, dignity, and fortitude in starting her life anew. Her desire to tell her story in schools and her willingness to help doctors in hospitals demonstrate her courage to relive her painful experiences in order to educate young people and contribute to the society in which she lives. She offers an invaluable testimony to the horrors of Mussolini's Fascism and Hitler's Nazism, and is committed to retelling these events in the hope that they will not be repeated.

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