

Viviana Facchinetti

...AND TEARS WET THEIR ROOTS



Stories and memories
of Julian-Dalmatian emigrants in Canada



Associazione Italiani Pola e Istria - LCPE Odv

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Translated into English by Fr. Marco Bagnarol IMC
with the cooperation
of Helena Tan and Roberto Pregarz
and revised by Laila Guida



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PRESENTATION

“Crossing a bridge, wading across a river, crossing a border means leaving the intimate and familiar space, where each one has his own place, in order to penetrate into a different horizon, an unknown and foreign space where, facing oneself with the other person, one runs the risk of discovering oneself to be without one’s own place, without an identity”. Written by the Frenchman Jean-Pierre Vernant in his very beautiful book “Without Borders” which has just been translated in Italian, apparently it seems to enter into conflict with the certainty many times reasserted in his writings by Claudio Magris: “... without coming out of oneself, from one’s own origins, from what has been received as a departure point, there is no growth or maturation or freedom and there is no possibility to return freely, creatively, to one’s own origins and to one’s own native home, no longer passively experienced with visceral forced bonds, but rather recognized and loved with that love which is vivifying only if it is devoid of every idolatry, even with regards to oneself”. And, in reality, they are two complimentary affirmations: both of them are true, both of them written by people who know, study and experienced the exile, the physical, geographical, material one, and the psychological one, more solitary, profound and hidden. It is true that leaving behind one’s own horizon in order to advance into an unknown and foreign place, can cost the loss of identity and I would like to say, of the soul. Just as it is as well true that without coming out of one’s own origins, from one’s own departure point, from one’s own house of birth, one is destined to remain for the rest of one’s own life just like children we have been in that house, without really managing to become adults.

Vernant describes the melancholy of the loss.

Magris makes an invitation to have the courage to look for a world and a new oneself.

And this book is as if it were the perfect illustration of the two concepts: stories of Istrians who lost their homeland, land, house of birth, the language of their origins, the warmth of their blue seas which the pine trees bend into to mirror themselves, and who have almost wound up in another world, thousands of kilometres away, forced to get the eyes used to unlimited horizons of forests and of snow, to speak an unknown language, to bend themselves into jobs never done before, to logics that they had never been educated towards. In the background, it is obvious, there is melancholy, regret. And, above all, a kind of anger by now very distant for having

been forced to pay for something of which they were not guilty or aware: the feeling of injustice is a lump that remains in the throat, in the heart and in the stomach, and it will never go away, it lasts as long as life lasts.

It belongs to the Istrians, marvellous, of this book, and to all of the Istrians in every part of the world. And, however, through all of the narratives of which this beautiful book is woven, half document and half novel (because the lives that it tells about are novels), there is even the feeling, the awareness, I would like to say the pride of the tiring personal and group conquest, which has managed to overturn the defeat of departure into a conquest: these Istrians who left sixty years ago, deprived of the past and without any guarantee for a future, only out of personal merit, by the commitment with themselves and I would like to say with their community, solely strengthened by their inexhaustible working capacity and honesty, have managed today (and they tell about it well) to become free people, within a destiny which wanted them to be victims and impotent, have been able with only their strengths to build their individual and collective role as people who can and want to choose the ways, times and even the places of their life. In order to go back to Claudio Magris “they can go back freely, creatively, to their own origins and to their own house of birth” (many of them tell it with great clarity), without feeling crushed by it.

It is a book which substantially repeats a unique, very beautiful, concept, which is needed by the Istrians, and together with them in this moment all of Italy and Europe: it is possible to win. It is possible to start again, to rebuild, even and actually starting from nothing. There is a time for tears, and a time for courage. Sometimes they can even travel together.

How good it is for the Istrian exiles to tell the entire world about it.

Anna Maria Mori

IN ORDER TO REMEMBER WITHOUT RESENTMENT

The great success obtained from the interviews gathered together by Viviana Facchinetti amidst the Adriatic exiles in Australia and published in the fortunate book “Stories out of History”, is not the only element which has lead us into planning the continuation in Canada of the interviews already collected in Australia upon the initiative of the Province of Trieste, then lead by Renzo Codarin, and by the President of the CDM of the time Paolo Sardos Albertini.

In fact, only after having looked at all of the phonic, photographic and television material, we realized that the work carried out in Australia constituted a first-class documentation, initially destined to those who had experienced the exodus in the flesh and to their descendants, but which was of interest even and above all to scholars and to present and future historians.

We exiles are destined to read Viviana’s two volumes with the eyes of nostalgia and with the memory of far distant facts, constantly present in our minds because they changed our lives. We recall, however, even the first great bitterness and disappointments of when we set our first foot on the Motherland and were unexpectedly welcomed by the hostile cries of groups of our fellow “dogmatic” countrymen, as is said today, who accused us of being “fascist criminals” only because we did not accept selling our centuries-old Italianness and our freedom, and above all because we refused to experience the denationalization of our lands, systematically carried out by Tito’s communist regime, considered since 1948 (the date of the Tito-Stalin rupture) by the Italian and western press to be “the communist with a human face”. We, instead, would call the dictator by the non-politically correct name of “infoibatore”*.

* Infoibatore: the cruel person responsible for killing thousands of people by throwing them in the “foibe”. The Foibe killings or Foibe massacres refer to the killings that took place mainly in Istria during and shortly after World War II from 1943 to 1949, perpetrated mainly by Yugoslav Partisans. The name derives from a local geological feature, a type of deep karst sinkhole called foiba.



During the first period of the Exodus in the Motherland, I will only remember some extreme episodes, which however give an idea of the climate established against us. The whistling, the insults, the threats and the attempt to keep the exiles from getting off the boats on the part of the CGIL dockworkers in Venice, who actually protested against the arrival of the corpse of Nazario Sauro, brought back to the Motherland by those who had given up the space reserved for their own personal luggage, remain in our soul and in the history of Italy. The shame even remains of the strike by the “dogmatic” railway workers in Bologna who kept a sorrowful train of Julian Dalmatian exiles from stopping at the station in order to allow the fugitives to fill up their water-bottles with drinkable water. On that occasion, the milk, then precious, which the Catholic humanitarian organizations had brought for the children of the “Criminals who had fled from Yugoslavian popular justice” was poured all over the railway tracks.

The exiles who did not stop in Italy but crossed the Atlantic Ocean in search of work and tranquillity have, as a norm, suffered both the ingratitude of the “dogmatic” Italian brethren of the first postwar period and the bitterness of having to do the most tiring jobs imposed upon the last arrivals in Australia, in Canada, in the United States and in Latin America. Neither was their professionalism or their specific training recognized.

I wanted to recall this Calvary so that the reader of this and Facchinetti’s previous work will find that the testimonies collected are pervaded by a serenity and by a total lack of hatred, of a will for revenge or for vendetta which accompany, usually, the narratives of other categories which suffered from a forced exodus. In our case, the exodus was imposed with terror, established with terror, established with the killing of over tens of thousands of Italian men and women, hurled into the Istrian *foibe*, shot or drowned in the Adriatic Sea with a blow of an oar to the head.

In the testimonies of the exiles all of this is implicit, but covered with the typical reserve of our people, by the shyness for the things suffered intimately, by the will to forget in order to begin a new life on a different continent and in a world of better men than the ones left so hurriedly behind in our very beautiful cities and islands. The exiles of the new world have, however, jealously kept traditions, uses, customs and our beautiful Venetian dialect, that is, all of the essential elements in order to maintain and to hand on down the ancient identity of our people, which sinks its own roots into the prehistoric Mediterranean civilization of Oil and Wine.

Renzo de’ Vidovich

GETTING TO KNOW THE PAST IN ORDER TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE

February 1947: the figures advance solemnly onto the ship, towards the s/s TOSCANA that is waiting. Upon the shoulders, the resignation of the surrender to the definitive detachment from one's own land; it weighs much more than the suitcases with the essential things to lead to safety. Towards where? It is not known. Composedly, without hubbub. The sound seems to have worn itself out, with the proclamations of war and of peace: for the exiles who are leaving the silence of the pain remains, highlighted by the grave sound of the siren which calls them to climb aboard...

The sequence of images of the Luce archive relating to the exodus, which the sensitivity of the cameramen of the time knew how to immortalize, the one of the embarkation aboard the s/s TOSCANA in particular, has become a bit the symbol of the drama experienced by the Istrians, Fiumians and Dalmatians, begun in the immediate postwar period and continued well beyond the time of the London Memorandum.

A drama in black and white, of which there has begun to be talk of just in recent times, and not always with a cognition of cause. But how many Italians have been or are aware of the reality of those events, by now distant almost 60 years ago? Of that history, experienced against their will in their own flesh by our people, and of which practically three generations have borne the wounds on their soul. Those who back then were grandparents, parents and children, but even those who from that moment onwards would be forced to be born far from their roots: in refugee camps, in situations of uneasiness and often incomprehensibly badly seen by those who knew nothing about these people forced to abandon their own past. Those people learnt only from the stories of grandparents and parents of the existence of their land, of their traditions, of the forced detachment.

The years of the Istrian-Fiumian-Dalmatian exodus can without a doubt be defined as a historical period, for quite too long having remained awaiting recognition and a dignified classification in history. And there still remains a lot to be known, in order to understand. Not in a context of justicialism, but of justice, of adequate attribution of values and of recognition of merits, for the courage and the will of however wanting to go forward; giving an adequate dimension to an experience which for quite sometime has ruined the cohabitation between fellow countrymen, generating conflicts of sentiments, in a love and hate, hope and anger relationship.

Pausing for a while to read in the real diary of history, without rhetoric, only in order to understand and in order to find the way to build a good future together.

The project of Viviana Facchinetti continues in such an optic, which the CDM has pleasure in being able to continue to support, once again together with Institutions and Associations, attentive to the aims of the recovery and safeguarding of a collective memory and of a historical-cultural heritage, which for quite sometime have risked being irremediably lost.

It is not a question of an obsessive search for supposedly hidden motives, but of a recovery of the past, a foundation of unquestionable value, but above all a basis upon which to place the present and the future.

Renzo Codarin

Presidente Nazionale ANVGD

Associazione Nazionale Venezia Giulia Dalmazia

Presidente CDM

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Due to its temporal uniqueness and due to its contents, Julian-Dalmatian emigration positions itself outside of the traditional schemes of Italian emigration, produced by the years of economic contingency in the 20th century. And it still remains little known.

Tasselli of a kind of immense puzzle, at the end of the Second World War, 350,000 existences born and raised in Istria, Fiume, Dalmatia, found themselves – against their will – dispersed all over the world.

Italy had paid a high price for the outcome of the war. The peoples of Venetia Julia, above all, paid the price for it. From the washing of the stain of the defeat, the territorial fabric came out irremediably felted, with an adjustment of borders and an existential uncertainty destined to go on for a decade and beyond. The forced metamorphosis of the region, deprived in favour of Yugoslavia of the Italian territories of the eastern Adriatic Sea, transformed the Julian peoples into foreigners in their own homeland. The obscurantism that followed started a diaspora, sorted out in time and in the temporariness of settlement. It was an anomalous phenomenon, relegated at length between the wounds of history, often summarized in a few news headlines or packaged in statistical entries.

Continuing with the editorial project started off a few years ago with the recovery of memories and emotions of Julian-Dalmatian emigrants in Australia, the present volume would like to contribute towards at least recomposing a part of that remote puzzle of existences, which has crumbled itself a bit throughout all of the continents.

This time the work is dedicated to the Julian-Dalmatians residing in Canada.

Without any historical haughtiness, but pushed by the affectionate approval with which the previous collection of testimonies has been collected, yet again the person who is writing only places herself in her role as a chronicler, in reporting the stories collected live from the mouths of the protagonists, cooperating as much as possible in the recovery of a memory and of an experience of which a reduced information exists (this being a topic constantly objected to by the people interviewed, with a relative general disappointment for how their vicissitudes – often dramatic – have remained ignored by a lot of Italians). Incredible is the number of our fellow countrymen who in the last postwar period found themselves crossing the Atlantic, in order to continue their future elsewhere. And incredible are the vicissitudes that they found themselves facing. Years of renunciation and toil have, however, been a dignified

premise for a general confirmation in the country of adoption. There are laborious stories of success, tied to the land and to agriculture, parallel to gratifying journeys in enterprise and in the Canadian cultural world.

Gathering together that multitude which found an existential serenity on the shores of the American Great Lakes, the memory of the land of origin, sprinkled with the saltiness of the Adriatic Sea.

The more conspicuous presence is the one of the exiles – from Fiume, Dalmatia and, above all, from Istria – but there is even a discrete number of natives from Trieste, present certainly in a visibly inferior number than in Australia.

Meeting them, besides being a gratifying personal experience on the human level, has even contributed towards filling up gaps – moreover quite widespread according to the person who is writing – in the knowledge of the implications of the exodus.

Viviana Facchinetti



A stamp on an identity card and the adventure began towards a new life beyond the ocean: an unusual passport with a group photograph

To my daughter Daniela

A TURNING POINT

Once upon a time...

Only fairytales can allow themselves to start like this, otherwise the conversation sounds like it is defeatist, crepuscular, regretful.

And, in fact, it is not fairytales that are collected in these pages, but journeys of real life, crossed by many protagonists of that history unjustly defined as being minor, in reality a suffered history.

There was a time...

is the beginning of the memory of the events told in these pages.

Almost always it was the beginning of common existences, normally eyeing the right to a future – at times simply any, at times based upon fantasies cherished by childhood dreams or juvenile illusions.

Then the storm. And like shipwrecks in the storm, they look for a landing place. For many the first one was Trieste, from where – amidst a thousand uncertainties – their survival was sorted out.

... and so many *once upon a time* had to transform themselves into *a turning point*.

Adm. Bldg. : SOCANETRAL
Telephone : AVenue 8-4032

LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE D'ÉTABLISSEMENT RURAL
RURAL SETTLEMENT SOCIETY OF CANADA

545, AVENUE VIGER

MONTREAL 24, (Canada)

Montréal, August 12, 1957

Mr. Antonio Morgan,
c/o Mr. George Kerr,
R. R. 2,
Dresden, Ont.

Re: Your Passage ex ss "Tulcania" 3./17.5.57

Dear Mr. Morgan,

By our sister organization, the N.C.W.C. Trieste Mission,
we have been informed of your arrival in Canada. We hope you had
a nice crossing and have meanwhile become accustomed to your new
surroundings.

We have further been advised that you were granted a travel loan,
which is composed as follows:

Ocean Passage:	3/1 - 2/2	\$800.00
Canadian Inland Rail: Halifax/Chatham	3/1 - 2/2	174.80
Landing Money:		<u>40.00</u>
Miscellaneous:		\$1014.80
Less Amount paid in Europe:	./.	<u>\$ 192.00</u>
Total Amount of Loan:		\$ 822.80

As you know, this amount has to be repaid to our Society in monthly
instalments, and we ask you kindly to send us Bank or Postal Money
Orders. For your first remittance you may use the enclosed self-
addressed envelope.

With best wishes for your future stay in Canada, we are,

Sincerely yours,

RURAL SETTLEMENT SOCIETY OF CANADA
Immigration Section

Al Barandelli

/ew

Korrespondenz auch in deutscher Sprache — Corrispondenza anche in italiano

Welcoming letter by the Rural Settlement Society of Canada, with the amount of travelling expenses to be reimbursed

SETTING OFF IN ORDER TO START AGAIN

It was not easy to hurriedly load one's own life amidst what remained of the past and a future of total risk. Right from the beginning, the exit from the bellicose tunnel turned out to be particularly anomalous and tiring for Venetia Julia: practically amputated of almost all of the territory which had connoted it, for over a decade it welcomed the sea of refugees fleeing from the places which no longer belonged to it. The domino effect of such a mass movement falls in a particular way upon the existential equilibrium of Trieste, already tried for 40 days after the end of the war by the brutal occupation of Tito's troops and then having passed under Anglo-American Allied Military Government administration, in a provisional character which did not provide sure answers.

It was a very long postwar period, which started a drama in two times and infinite frameworks. After the first conspicuous exodus following the Treaty of Paris of the 10th February, 1947, which had handed over to Tito Dalmatia, Fiume and southern Istria, in 1954 the London Memorandum sanctioned the end of the Anglo-American administration over Zone A of the Free Territory of Trieste – which was able to reattach itself to Italy – while it left to Yugoslavia the remaining Istrian territory, countersigned as Zone B. Due to the situation that came about to be created – often persecutory – which did not recognize their Italian identity and nationalized their belongings, even many inhabitants of those lands found themselves in the conditions of having to detach themselves from their own roots.

The Istrian-Dalmatian-Quarnerian refugees arrived in Italy in different moments, ways and conditions. The stay in the welcoming camps is what, however, almost heaped everybody together. Campo Marzio, San Sabba, Padriciano, Opicina, Sistiana, Villa Carsia, Zaule, Ferdinando, Silos: the various areas in which for years their settlement in Trieste was set up. At every arrival, the sad ritual was repeated of the deposit, in the warehouses of the old port, of the belongings which managed to be saved from their own homes. It should have been a question of a provisional operation: they have become material for the museum dedicated to the exodus.

Neither the collective emergency dwellings distinguish themselves all that much from each other: in different shacks, which separated men from women and children, or in big huge rooms, where blankets hung up on cords pulled between the walls, transformed into a beehive of family “monovanes”. Bathrooms were collective and centralized. For meals, there were the canteens, functioning in the area itself

or scattered in various parts of the city, where food was picked up with mess tins.

Fermo, Ascoli Piceno, Cinecittà, Capua, Pagani, Bagnoli, Aversa, Barletta, Latina, Trani, Fraschette di Alatri, Casermette di Borgo San Paolo in Turin, Laterina, Marina di Massa, Novara, Marghera, Mantua, Brescia, Santa Maria di Leuca: covered a bit of all of the national territory the thick network of refugee camps, integrated from 1947 to 1952 by the IRO (International Refugee Organization) centres, an organization working under the auspices of the United Nations, which gave the displaced people the opportunity to emigrate.

As can be learnt from the single stories of the following pages, the persistence of the precariousness of life in the welcoming centres and the general trembling identity of the future, associated with the propaganda in favour of expatriation towards countries overseas, were a stimulus for a massive emigration. The dispositions which regulated it took the curtailing of the admissions to the departures, these being preceded by severe medical checkups and subordinated by the acceptance of a work contract, which almost always contemplated tasks of general unskilled work or of agricultural day labouring. For those who did not travel with IRO support, in the following two years there was the obligation of reimbursing the travel ticket.

There were many who sailed to Canada. The most frequent ships were the “Vulcania” and the “Saturnia”, if the boarding port was Trieste or, in any case, in Italy. Conspicuous, in fact, was even the number of exiles sent to Germany, to the IRO camp in Bremen, waiting to be transferred overseas. For everybody, the dates of the departure from Europe and the landing in Canada, where the trip ended after a crossing of about ten days, remain indelible. The landing almost always took place in Halifax, at the famous Pier 21, the pier which has become the Canadian symbol of immigration. Of the first successive moments, two are the things which particularly emerge as a common denominator in the memory of each of our emigrants. One was the disappointing discovery of the only kind of bread on sale then: a loaf, packaged, of a gummy consistency and of a displeasing taste. The other one is the hallucinating three day trip in order to reach the place of the final destination, done aboard a puffing steam train, old and in bad conditions, generally compared to a cattle car. So began the common procedure put up with by the new arrivals, almost a test of initiation to be passed in order to integrate themselves into the reality of their future.

At a distance of well over 50 years and having taken act of the goals achieved, the obstacles that they managed to overcome still today turn out to be incredible, often left as they were at the mercy of themselves, having to face the reality of an unknown world, which spoke either English or French.

The significant transformations which took place in Canada during this span of

time, are recognized even as a merit of the Italians who emigrated there who, with commitment and serious professionalism, in many fields brought considerable innovations. An example can be found in the field of construction, then almost exclusively built with wood, and which now avail themselves of state of the art building materials and techniques. The same can be said in the food sector, at the time rather limited and frequently marked by canned meat and salted butter. In addition to these, thanks to few “clandestine” imports of seeds coming from the lands of origin, the crops in the vegetable garden have even extended themselves to home-produced *radicchio*, while most of Vancouver fishermen speak the Istrian dialect.

Once called “spaghetti eaters”, our fellow countrymen knew how to spread the tradition of pasta and of *real bread*, very much appreciated today, as is all Italian cuisine in general. But not only, because attention and respect are now reserved for everything that bears the Italian mark.

On the other hand our people, besides the language, have assimilated uses, customs and values that they learnt to appreciate beyond the 50th meridian west. Not last, the passion for hockey – the national sport – which enthuses above all the new generations, as can be witnessed to by the festive car carousels at the end of the championship.

Steps of a difficult journey – which can now, however, be looked at with just satisfaction – learnt by the person who is writing during the course of her Canadian interviews. The majority were gathered between April and May of 2004.

ITALISH

As has happened a bit throughout all of the lands of emigration during the first moment of settlement, even in Canada the new arrivals have sought a linguistic support in the fellow countrymen who previously settled themselves. Southern Italians, protagonists of an old and consistent migratory tradition – and therefore present on the spot for quite sometime – often transmitted to the Julian-Dalmatians a personalized translation of English, learnt in a more or less correct way: the so-called Italianish was born – destined to a successive metamorphosis, in the adaptation to our dialect.

We have already referred to some neologism in due time in the Italish of Australia. Facilitating the understanding of some spontaneous passages quoted in the following pages, a glance will be necessary at the list of the most frequent words assimilated by the Julian peoples who have emigrated to Canada.

Accomodarsi = to find a logistical settlement (from the English, accommodation/ accommodations, settlement).

Aggiustarsi = to look after oneself, to commit oneself (from the English, to adjust/ settle in, adapt oneself).

Basamento = cellar, basement recreation room (from the English, basement).

Basca, baschetta = container for harvesting produce from the fields (from the English, basket/container).

Bordanti = people who lodge in private homes (from the English, boarder/lodger).

Ceca = cheque (from the American/cheque).

Deposito = down payment, part payment (from the English, deposit).

Essere a bordo finito = to stay full board in a private home.

Farma = farm, agricultural establishment (from the English, farm).

Farmisti – farmaioli = farmers, agricultural workers (from the English, farmer).

Fattoria = factory (from the English, factory).

Fornitura = furniture (from the English, furniture).

Gente singola = bachelors.

Gingerella = soft drink, pop (from the English, ginger ale).

Giudei = people of the Jewish faith (from the English, Jewish).

Guardare come = to seem (from the English, to look like).

I next door = the neighbours.

I cross street = the people across the street.

Intervista = informative conversation in order to be employed or admitted (from the English, interview).

Parcar = to park (from the English, to park).

Rentar = to rent, to let (from the English, to rent).

Storeto = small shop (from the English, store/shop).

Stufa = cooker (from the English, stove).

Tracheto = van (from the English, truck/van).

Treila = camper (from the English, trailer).

There are even more folkloristic variants of the Anglo-Italian language, which, however, remain a prerogative above all of the emigrants from southern Italy, but according to the person who is writing, deserving a kind smile of attention:

Checca = cake, sweet (from the English, cake).

Marchetta = supermarket (from the English, Market).

Gerla = girl (from the English, girl).

Bega = bag (from the English, bag).

Quina = queen (from the English, queen).



Jack R. Mitchinson, immigration officer in Canada from 1952 to 1990, collected an interesting documentation, relating to the arrival and settlement of Istrian refugees

CHATHAM, practically the Istria of Ontario

From the shores of the Adriatic Sea to the ones of the Atlantic Ocean... and you find Istria once again. The one that from the 1950s continues beyond the ocean, in a significant manner in the territories of eastern Canada, but particularly in the city of Chatham. With its baggage of memories and traditions close at hand.

Despite the progressive contraction of presences determined by the natural biological Decalogue, of the people of refugees who in Canada sought a bit of relief from their past torments, there are still 250 families today originally from Istria in the North American region. At the time, the most consistent group was in fact the one that settled in Chatham, a small city of Ontario – presently made up of 43,000 inhabitants – southwest of Toronto, on the banks of the Thames River, with an active agricultural market (sugar beets, vegetables, fruit, tobacco) and the headquarters of food and metal mechanical industries. It was actually in order to develop the agricultural production of the area as well as the manpower of the local sugar factory and tobacco industry that, in the years following the diaspora, the Istrian refugees were lured with seductive prospects of well-being, illustrated by the emissaries of the Canadian government, sent to contact them in person in the refugee camps set up in Trieste.

It is told by Jack R. Mitchinson, an immigration officer in Canada from 1952 to 1990, actually residing in Chatham, who with meticulous care collected an interesting documentation, relating to the arrivals and settlement of the Istrian refugees. He recalls the visit to Trieste of Charlie Broadwell – head of the farmers of the Sugar Company – then followed by Bev Easton who, in the camp of Padriciano, conducted an awareness campaign amongst the potential emigrants. Even if softened by prospects of a desirable future, what they were offering was practically a recruitment of manpower for hard agricultural work. Many, however, were the families, more or less resigned, which wanted to believe in that solution and which accepted the contract. Right from the first arrivals, enthusiastic was the reply within Canadian immigration spheres, in the person of Naldi Coletto in particular.

We had made attempts in the past – markedly disappointing – with the native peoples of the place, with the Hungarians, with the labourers of Nova Scotia. Nobody could match the comparison with the yield of the Istrians – Mr. Mitchinson highlights: their seriousness and professionalism were so much appreciated by the agents of Chatham, as to keep their arrival hidden, so as to avoid the risk of farms

from other regions taking them away. More than once, in fact, on the train that they were travelling in, there were episodes of heated disputes between local farm managers and competitors – especially from Nova Scotia – in order to compete for their cooperation.

But our fellow countrymen only received news about these events just now.

FROM DAWN TO DUSK

The logistical settling in, once having arrived, was almost always an unknown: as good as it could go, it would end up in crumbling abandoned cottages, to be re-structured, far from everything and everybody.

Work in the fields was very hard: piecework and seasonal. It had to be sufficiently remunerated in order to cover the period of long winters, snowy and cold, with few opportunities for a job which could substitute the summer one. For some, there was the possibility of finding work in the sugar factory or in the tobacco factory, where – after the harvest and drying – there was the conclusive phase of the manufacturing of the tobacco leaves, destined to the production of cigars. This being a sector which, especially at the time of the Cuban crisis, had a considerable impulse.

From the limited possibility of being able to have a yearly income, thus derived the necessity of involving the whole family in the planting and harvesting operations. The seedlings to be planted in rows required adequate techniques, in order not to compromise their development: not too close, but neither too far apart from each other in order not to waste space, the roots did not have to sink all that much into the soil... The areas that had to be looked after stretched as far away as the eye could see. At times in a day one could hardly cover two rows of clods of earth: one in the direction of going, the other one in the direction of the return... and even with very small children close by. One would begin even before daylight and would end up when the sun had already set. *From dawn to dusk* – the expression widely used in order to summarize the memory of that experience.

MARIO AND SANTINA BREZZI

There are more or less forty kilometres from Sicciole – where Mario Brezzi was born in 1936 – to Trieste. And yet he had never been to Trieste. The contingencies of life made him arrive there for the first time at the age of 19. Not even two years later would they have catapulted him thousands of kilometres away.

There were seven in the family: three brothers and two sisters, the parents. His father worked in the salt works. Mario was a lively child. *There were the Germans who occupied the school and I would barter grapes in exchange for cigarettes with them* – he recalls. *I was already smoking at the age of 9.*

He experienced the changes of the postwar period with resignation, in order to live peacefully. As long as it was possible, he attended Italian schools. Then his father's death, when he was 17 years old, interrupted his education. He lived at home with his mother, together with his brother Giorgio, who worked in the mine; the others were married. The daily economic scarcities made him take note that there was no future there: in order to buy a pair of shoes, one had to renounce bread. Together with Libero – his older brother, who already was a policeman during the war – he crossed the border in order to go to Trieste. ... With a little suitcase and an 8 litre demijohn of wine. It was the 29th November, 1955. After a few years in the area of Campo Marzio, the transfer to the camp of Padriciano. Quite soon Libero found a job in a factory, in Verona, and Mario found himself alone, waiting for his other brother to be able to arrive. *I first worked in the countryside at Bagnoli, then in the quarry. I thought about going to South Africa, but I was not accepted, because I did not know English. Today, I say thank God* – he added.

The doors to Canada were opened up and with his brother Giorgio he boarded the ship “Saturnia”: it was the 8th March, 1957. In four suitcases there was all their past, supported by the hope of a future, of which however they did not absolutely know its traits. Upon landing at Halifax, the usual three day crossing followed, aboard the *train of horrors*, full of emigrants coming from everywhere. Amongst them many – not really in harmony with the minimum rules of civil manners – would do their personal physiological needs in the corners of the corridors. The result was that on the floor a rivulet would be running of dubious origin. *In order not to walk into it and in order to reach a kind of wagon-canteen, I had to walk on the benches, which acted as seats and even as beds. We arrived in Chatham on a Saturday. On Sunday they gathered us Istrians together for a photograph, destined to the local press, and then the farmers took us to their farms. For months we lost sight of our fellow townspeople.*

The first accommodations were a wooden shack with two beds, a toilet outside.

It was so cold that he and his brother burnt all of the firewood piled up there and kept by the farmer for the winter drying of tobacco. The work was occasional, in the fields, at 60 cents an hour. With 7 dollars, however, they would manage to do the shopping for a whole week. *In terms of pasta, only spaghetti and macaroni could be found. However, at the first Christmas we managed to even cook a risotto for ourselves, given that a consistent Chinese colony existed for sometime in this land* – the narrative of Mario.

Months went by, the logistical settlement went on improving bit by bit. He managed to buy a car for himself. It was not a frivolity, it was a need in order to be able to move around, covering the great distances which separated them from the city and from an almost normal life. Having the possibility for it, after a year of that life, Mario would have immediately gone back to Italy. He instead moved to Chatham, where he alternated winter time work in the tobacco factory, with the summer one in the construction industry.

Then he met Santina Melon, whom he had met in passing at the time of Padriciano and whom he unexpectedly found again at the railway station, where he had gone to welcome a group of new arrivals.

Santina too was born in Istria, at Materada, in 1941. From the age of two, however, she had moved to Salvore with her family, on the hillock of Stanzia Grande. They lived



Istrian refugees welcomed upon their arrival at Chatham by Bev Easton, who in the Padriciano camp had promoted the opportunities offered them by Canada (courtesy of Mr. Mitchinson)

on the Cesari farm. And it is to that place that the memory of his childhood goes back... and to the discomfort of having to go down to Salvore in order to get water with a tub on the head, after the well in the courtyard of home had dried up. Together with her three sisters. They had to be there by ten o'clock in the morning, because after that hour the water supply was deviated in favour of the tourists of the pine forest. ... *but it was so nice to have the seaside at a stone's throw away! We were so young and we had such a desire for carefreeness.* ... And upon their return, their mother would welcome them with a stick, because of the spilt water or because of the delay in the return.

Life had become difficult. In the postwar era, not only because of water was it not easy to live; especially because of a free spirit like the one of her mother, who had never accepted the drastic change that had taken place. Language was not a problem because she knew Croatian, but not accepting the impositions of the new system, she turned out to be on the black list of the people who were not going to vote. Even longing for better prospects for the future of her children, she convinced her husband: notwithstanding the regret of having to leave grandparents behind, in November of 1955, the family left for Trieste. They had permission in order to take away with them some oil and a cow, for which they immediately found a buyer, once having crossed the border. After the usual brief stopover at Campo Marzio, there was the transfer into the shacks of Padriciano, where they lived for a few years: the father worked at the Ironworks, she and her elder sister served in the homes of some families in Trieste. Yet again her mother was worried about their future, which she connected with the prow of the ship "Vulcania" heading to Canada. She did not know anything about that country, except for the fact that it was far and very cold. She experienced the intense cold and the snow immediately upon her arrival in Halifax, notwithstanding the fact that it was the month of April. They were welcomed by the emissaries of the Sugar Company. The train which they climbed aboard did not deny its fame: it looked like a troop train. The old coal stoked locomotive made all of them reach their destination entirely black.

She recalled the words of her maternal grandfather, who was once an emigrant in Argentina, but who returned home: *don't go to Canada. If you wish, the American dream is even at your home...*

The first settlement was at the factory of a Czechoslovakian: room and kitchen, water and toilet outside. A lot of cold, notwithstanding the firewood; in order to keep warm at night – they would go to bed under the blankets with double long johns. During the day their mother cared that the fire would not go out, so that a bit of warmth would be maintained and even the water would be heated up in order to give oneself a fragmentary rinse upon returning from the fields. *There were no*

daily showers. Only a bath in a tub once a week... The farmer was rather surly and demanding. He would begin to knock at the door very early in the morning.

Particularly gruelling was the harvest of sugar beets which, having matured, are a kind of big carrot which can easily reach 6 kilograms. At the time, they were collected one at a time, cleaning them of their leaves with a kind of machete and piling them up for the successive loading onto a tractor. *Time and technology later on obviated the discomfort, but back then it was really hard.* Santina and Mario were the first couple of Istrians to get married in Chatham. They were even the first, unfortunately, to have to deal with a death in the family, with the passing away of Santina's father.

Their first little daughter was born in 1963. Right from the very first months of life, the little girl, in her stroller, was next to her mother, who worked in the tomato fields. At the age of seven, she too had become very quick in the harvesting of vegetables: she would manage to fill up 10-20 baskets, because she wanted *her mother to buy a little brother for her.*

Santina continued her work in the fields for 27 years, alternating herself with her husband in looking after the children: employed in the local truck factory, where he worked for thirty years, Mario, in fact, chose the night shift for many years.



The crossing towards Canada aboard the m/v Vulcania. A view of the restaurant (from Santina Melon Brezzi's album)

Now, after 40 years, their life is in Canada, even if the nostalgia persists for both of them, perhaps more for Mario. His first return to Sicciole – in 1974 – was a mixture of palpitations and sadness: he re-embraced his mother and saw once again the places of his childhood years, but a lot of houses and fields were abandoned, many friends were no longer there. They got used to living without the sea, on the banks of a river, in the Great Lakes region, but during a visit to Vancouver the smell of saltiness reinvigorated the memory of the past.

A new identity is gaining an upper hand: their daughter speaks Italian, their son a little, their grandchildren nothing at all. Even their dialect is slowly fizzling out in all the new generations.

We are now here and even if we wanted to, we can no longer go back there: they sell to the French and the Germans, but the Istrians are not allowed to buy. Perhaps being Canadians...

The visit to Sicciole in 2004 brought another emotion to Mario: for the first time after 47 years, three childhood friends – separated by historic events – got together again Umberto Medos from Victoria (British Columbia)

Domenico Marchesich from Paris

Mario Brezzi from Chatham.



Sicciole 2004: after 47 years, Umberto Medos from Victoria (British Columbia), Domenico Marchesich from Paris, Mario Brezzi from Chatham (first on the left) get together for the first time in their native town

NORMA FAVENTO widow CORRENTE

I lived at 726 Calle delle Mura in an old Venetian house. We had a charcoal warehouse, where even firewood and petroleum were sold, because we got electricity only in 1936.

For Norma it seemed like yesterday, given that the memory of her childhood years at Capodistria, where she was born on the 4th May, 1928, is still alive in her. A happy childhood, even if in a poor family: her parents, a son, two daughters. It was her mother who looked after the warehouse, while her father worked in the fields. On Sundays she would go to help him out, this being a commitment which would oblige her to go to Mass at six o'clock in the morning, at the Capuchin Friars. *But once I became a young lady, I would go to the eleven o'clock one, in order to be able to cast sidelong glances at the boys* – she adds winking, with an unvaried Istrian cadence – *and Father Fonda would reprimand us because we were talking...*

She remembers customs and traditions, connected with her notes on the calendar, marking off the arrival of festivities, which meant chocolate, pinza or sweetbread. ... and then her school friends, the festivals, where there would be singing and dancing... Everything stopped when she finished the seventh year of school. The war had broken out: the youth were at the front and Norma found herself working in the fields.

... A whole series of moments followed, hard to live out and difficult to overcome: she was by now an adolescent and, in order not to expose her to the glances of the German soldiers, her father would hide her in a wagon used for the grape harvest, amidst the barrels and under the sacks. Later in the conflict, with partisan formations in the countryside and Nazi-fascists in the city, it was necessary to find ways to get around the alternate risk of seizures of transported loads, justified by mutual accusations of collaborationism. As had happened, for example, after the attack on the aqueduct, when their barrels full of water were requisitioned by Tito's soldiers, with the accusation of supplying the fascists. Or when, during the time of the grape harvest, the Nazis hung on the trees the pigs belonging to families they believed having sons in the partisan formations.

At the end of the war, suddenly an illness took away mother Favento in 1946. The conditions introduced by the new administration did not contribute towards the easing of living conditions. *Added to the heavy fiscal burdens imposed on any kind of property – even on a chicken – was even the uncertain sale of the harvest, which out of obligation had to be taken to the social cooperative: payment was contemplated only in case of sale.* Furthermore for her father, there was the discomfort of only being able to use one room in his house, which was assigned by the new government to people arriving from who knows what distant region of the Yugoslavian Federa-

tion. The rent would go in favour of the State, but he had to be responsible for all the repairs. In order to go to the bathroom, he had to ask for permission. Despite such a situation, the man would not accept the invitation of his children – by now all married – to leave that house, where his family had lived since the times of his great grandfather. A few years later he changed his mind and rejoined his family members in the refugee camp in Trieste.

Norma and her husband – Bruno Corrente – having taken note of the new borders, decided in 1954 to leave Capodistria, as her elder siblings had already done previously. They left together with their three children who were born in the meantime. Besides their few personal effects, they obtained permission to take away only the bedroom set which, once in Trieste, they deposited “temporarily” at the silos of the old port. After a few days in an old hotel, next to the Town Hall - very cold, because there was no heating - they were settled at Padriciano. *First pavilion* – specifies Norma. *And we remained there for 29 months, in the uncertainty for the future, and with another daughter still, born shortly after.* Her husband alternated between various precarious jobs: from the Canarutto constructions to looking after the fields of a doctor. Her eldest son was sent to the Zandonai College in Pesaro.

The possibility to emigrate was read as a solution, but the young age of the children hampered admission into the contingent that was leaving for the U.S.A. After having run the same risk even for Canada, there was the providential intervention of Doctor Vianello who, in the camp, had looked after the children during the course of the usual childhood illnesses: she guaranteed the Correntes working seriousness and in eight days all of the bureaucratic-health requirements were fulfilled. On the 16th April, 1957, the little family boarded the m/v *Saturnia*. Except for the cold which they had heard a lot about, they did not know what was awaiting them. In their baggage there were above all winter clothes, and even a tub and a board for the laundry. The children took a ball and the tombola game along with them. The crossing was a sweet premise before the bitterness which, upon their arrival, they would have experienced for a while. Before the landing, Norma was complimented by the captain, for the order and cleanliness left behind in their cabin. Evidently, it was not something normal amongst the passengers during those kinds of trips.

Halifax awaited them at eight o'clock in the evening on the 29th April. Although it was springtime, there were mountains of snow... and the first harsh experience, of living aboard the usual train. The unhygienic environment was comparable to a cattle carriage, due to the reduced dimensions of the windows. They arrived in Toronto, dirty and hungry. With gestures they turned to an unknown person, met on a station bench: they tried to communicate their discomfort and their situation. In response

they were accompanied to the bathroom, to freshen up a bit, receiving some towels and a big bun each. Then there was the happy ending of being put onto a nice passenger train, which took them to their destination: Windsor. ... They never found out who their Saviour had been.

Having reached their destination together with a few other Istrian families whom they had got to know aboard, they found themselves sitting on the suitcases, trustfully waiting for someone to come to pick them up. *It is Sunday and the immigration offices are closed today* – explained a woman of Italian origins, who was passing by. Moved to compassion however, she contacted by phone the Catholic Action Movement, which looked after the settling of immigrants arriving from Italy. The Correntes did not have any money on them: they were accommodated for a week in a home for the handicapped. *All black and dirty, a room with a sink, used bed sheets, all full of holes. ... We have not come to receive charity, but to work* – the refrain that they would repeat everyday to the officers in order to obtain adequate accommodations. They took them to eat in a Chinese restaurant – in those days certainly not in fashion like now. Unaccustomed to the food, they left the restaurant still very hungry. Until Bruno managed to find a store in which he bought some *mortadella* and *Emmenthal* cheese: it was enough to satisfy them for a week.



Amongst the first accommodations in Chatham of the Corrente family, there was an old but liveable house

In the meantime, one of the families who had arrived with them and had settled much better into the new reality, found them a job in the picking of tomatoes. Better accommodations, but a seasonal job. And after? A solution seemed to arrive from a factory not too far away. The illusion lasted for a few hours: the house, even though it was old, looked alright from afar. But when they arrived there, they were terribly disappointed. Filth and antiquity aside, besides a decrepit wood-burning stove, cracks and holes at will, the bucket of the well from which water was to be drawn only emptied some greenish silt and an old work shoe. Norma remembers never having cried so much in her life.

Having re-contacted the person in charge, better times came a bit at a time in terms of occupational outlets: big flower greenhouses alternated with tomato fields and the picking of strawberries. An old but liveable house. Even the interlocutors turned out to be good people: from the Dutch owner of the farm who was available in case of need to accompany them with the car to the doctor who, having taken note of the reduced winter income and of the 30 dollar monthly debt for the reimbursement of the trip, would cure them all during the bad season on credit.

Even a permanent job arrived one fine day: for Bruno in the construction industry and for Norma, as a cook in the Chatham hospital. Completing the integration into the new country was even the birth of a fifth child.

The first time they returned to Italy – in 1984 – it was not possible to go to Capodistria, because the necessary time was missing in order to obtain the visa, of which they ignored the obligation.

It has not been long that Norma managed to see the old house where she was born in once again. Notwithstanding the restructuring, it is no longer the Capodistria of her memories: *since then, everything has been lost.*

Even if her house is beyond the ocean, her heart remains in Istria. *Even if the beginnings of the new life were hard, Canada gave me bread and the possibility to send my children to university.*

The bilingual diary – both in Italian and in English – that she is presently writing is dedicated to them and her grandchildren so that they can get to know the family's roots.

FRANCO FURLAN

The name stands out, but with discretion: on the placard placed outside of the group of offices, on many pallets stowed by the forklifts, onto trucks aligned in the wide clearing where the warehouses are facing, which store state of the art machinery. Furlan Bros: a farm at a pace with the times which, due to the supply of its tomatoes, has even received the certification of quality by the Heinz Tomato Ketchup, a giant in the production of gastronomic complement for the antonomasia of French fries. It is the gratifying recognition for a human and professional journey which began in Istria quite sometime ago.

Franco Furlan – born in 1940 – the fourth child after three sisters, was born at Ventimiglia, because in that area his father had found work in a construction company. With the outbreak of the war and with her husband called to arms, Furlan's mother had returned to her land of origin, just outside Capodistria, at Bossamarin. A few years later and notwithstanding the dark times, even the bellicose scene could act as a frame for a sweet story of family affections. A prisoner of the Germans after the 8th September, his father had managed to escape from Germany together with a few of his unfortunate companions: unshaven beard, worn out clothes and shoes, a worn out blanket was the only thing covering him up. He wandered around for a few months, before managing to reach his house. It is not known how, he managed to find an apple: he jealously kept it in order to take it to his son, so that he would not be afraid to meet his father, whom he had not managed to get to know up until then.

In 1945 to gladden the reunion of the family there was the birth of the fifth child, Franco's latest brother.

Theirs, however, was not a simple infancy. Starting with school. *Two men in the company of a robust woman, with red hair, all of a sudden entered into the classroom* – Franco remembers. She was introduced as the new teacher, while their teacher was contemporarily being removed: *they told us that from that day on they would have to speak only and exclusively Slovenian*. The children instead only knew Italian, and it was spontaneous, at least amongst them, to use their own language: a behaviour which cost them more than a few ringing slaps by the new teachers.

His father worked in the fields and as far as it could the family tried to give him a hand. The problem arose at the time of the selling of the produce, which had to be taken to the cooperative set up by the new ruling class. The Furlans, not aligning themselves, were penalized. Sporadically, they managed to sell something in Trieste.

In 1955, they filed an application in order to be able to go away. *From the moment of the authorization to the departure, you had 24 hours in order to leave,*

but as long as the notables held that you had a bit of money, they would not allow you to move – explains Franco. Our application was approved after six months.

Franco had been to Trieste a few times, with his mother, by steamer. As a refugee, he arrived there in a van, with all of his family and a few personal effects. On the day of their arrival, there were many of them who were destined to the refugee camp of Padriciano: women and children were settled in the buildings with heating; men and boys older than twelve, in a hangar. *I went to bed with my clothes and shoes on and covered by many blankets. They were still not enough to put up with the cold. The bed was shaking by the draughts coming from beneath the door due to the bora wind.* Things improved when they were assigned to the shacks: two families per room, there was a hanging blanket as a partition. Common bathrooms, outside. Although there was a canteen, mother opted to cook on an electric ring. There was the possibility for Franco to attend evening classes, with a professional course specializing in construction. *There was a really good teacher. I learnt more in a year from him than in all of the previous years – he highlights.*

Incidentally, Furlan remembers that his two elder sisters had gotten married. A brother-in-law of his worked in construction, the other one at the port. His third sister followed and married her fiancé in Australia; later they joined the rest of the family in Canada.

The decision to leave for Canada matured after the visit to the camp of the owner of the sugar factory in Chatham. *Dad only knew that in that continent there would have been a possibility to work. ... and on the 1st May of 1957, they boarded the m/v Vulcania. They had little and little was their luggage. During the crossing, they had the opportunity to bond with other Istrian refugees, coming from the various camps scattered throughout Italy. They arrived in Halifax on the 16th May. From the people in charge of welcoming they received 10 dollars per person. They went to do a bit of shopping. Now you can buy all kinds of bread here, but in those days the only existing bread was the toasting loaf kind, horrible and soggy, wrapped in plastic. I used it as a cushion, the moment I climbed aboard the train for Chatham – Franco mocked.*

Upon arriving at their destination, they found themselves with about sixty Istrian families. They were taken to Mass and then to lunch in the canteen. After the roll-call, they followed the person in charge of the sugar company, who had to accompany them to their accommodations. The weather was grey, what they saw from the window of the car was sad: *we hoped never to arrive.* As a house, they were assigned a shack, which in the beginning they thought was a tool shed. When we realized *that it was to be our house, our hearts sank.* Inside there was a bed – but there were four members in their family – a stove and a table with four chairs. When summer arrived,

it was so hot inside that, in order to cook, mum had to organize herself outside, like the old pioneers of the Far West: the pot hanging from a chain, above a wood fire. Everybody worked in the sugar beet fields.

Franco got to know some neighbours – a French family – and with them he began to speak a new language, convinced that he was learning English. In the end he discovered that he was speaking French.

Another anecdote – now a reason to laugh, but at the time painfully experienced – was the episode of the following winter, after they moved to another house, at the dependency of another owner. At the end of their first summer in Ontario, they had entered with enthusiasm into the building, with two storeys, with running water. But they had not calculated the rigours of the Canadian winter. Though having had the common sense to leave the tap open a bit over the sink, so as to keep the pipes from freezing during the night, the following morning they found the floor covered in ice, which actually blocked the doors. The water in the drain had frozen, and thus the running water flooded the floor and froze it. In order to be able to make use of the room, dad had to intervene with a hatchet, in order to break that unusual icy floor.

It was a hard beginning, but bit by bit their life improved. The goal to reach was to save the five thousand dollars necessary in order to go back to Italy. However once having been close to the goal, the necessary amount would have to be increased.

In the end, in 1963, the family managed to put together ten thousand dollars: they were used as a down payment for the purchase of a piece of land. The following year, they harvested their first own production: mainly tomatoes, some cucumbers. Beans, wheat and corn followed. As complementary work for Franco's occupation in the building sector, the activity went on expanding and consolidating itself evermore. Presently, the yearly production is about 6,000 tonnes of tomatoes, integrated with pumpkins and zucchini. If there is need, some pieces of land can still be rented, although the crops they already own cover about 600 hectares.

From the professional to the personal front, Franco Furlan's life is by now marked with a Canadian identity. *The times have gone by in which I would quickly learn even English in order to protect myself from being swindled* – he observes. *They could immediately single out the immigrants, we had a disoriented expression and a lost look.*

And there were those who would take advantage of it. An example? For 200 dollars I bought a refrigerator, for which now I would have to pay for its scrapping.

In terms of his life of relationships, his participation in the dancing feasts at the Belgian Club of Chatham marked a turn: he met there the woman, who later became his wife – a girl whose grandparents had in fact emigrated from Belgium – who learnt Italian from her mother-in-law. They have three children (the two elder ones have

completed their studies in the agricultural field, while the youngest is still a student) and three grandchildren.

After many years, Franco visited Bossamarin once again and saw his old house: it was emotionally sad to see an unknown person pop out from his house. Istria has become a place only to visit, even his wife likes it a lot, for his life has been transferred to Canada.

ANTEO AND ANNA PADOVAN

A practically genetic passion for the sea: this can be traced right from the first witty remarks of a conversation with Anteo Padovan. *Ours is a dynasty of fishermen* – he immediately points out – *right from the times of my great grandfather.*

Very vivid are the memories which tie him to the land of origin, from Cittanova – where he was born in 1927 – to Daila where he lived later on: episodes of life as a child – which certain factors made him become an adult before his time – they interlock with those burdens, which history often places on the shoulders of common folk.

His was a numerous family: his father Antonio, his mother Maria, the children Anteo, Antonio, Liliana, Giordano, Mario. The first daughter Giuseppina died after six months from meningitis. His grandmother Dimitri – of Greek origin and who passed away while he was still a small toddler – would wake him early up in the morning to go to Mass. *During winter it was still dark...*

He liked going fishing, swimming, playing soccer... *I did not have enough time, it was always too short* – is his narrative. He managed to go to school up until grade six. He then had to go to work with his father, who until then was helped out by a nephew, called up for military service. Anteo was 12 years old. *Those were other times; I had to leave school with a purpose.*

In a year's time, the slender boy became a skillfull fisherman, with just as much muscle. They had a seven metre long boat; *big boats or trawlers were not needed: one had to know the trade well and catch quality fish.* He would surely spend all of the nights from April to November at sea. *Summertime was beautiful, but during the bad season it was hard: wet and out in the cold. ...it was murder.*

Notwithstanding the heavy sacrifices, he liked his job. There were two problems to face: bad weather and dolphins, which would eat the fish from the nets put down during the night. Quite soon a third problem was added, and quite serious too: the war. *The airplanes would fly over us day and night; sometimes the bombs dropped by the American fighter planes would fall not too far away from us.*

Anteo's personal experiences with the war were dramatically many: besides the American bombardments, which even destroyed a part of his house, the close encounters with the German SS were not lacking, even a group execution, from which he fortunately came out unharmed. *...but even my father in turn – with some astuteness – had managed to get by in the war of Libya...*

Adventurous journeys continued even during the early postwar period and the setting in of Yugoslav administration. Since the “Zone B” was under provisional running, Italian citizens were not expected to perform compulsory military service, but Anteo – just like some other friends of his – received the call-up notice from Tito's government. Opposing would have been a serious risk: the foibe were the order of the day. They were five friends, all 19 years old. They decided to show up for the call. After a few months in the area, they began to hear talk in the barracks about transfers to far away areas in the Balkan hinterland. The boys set out to escape, by taking advantage of a free pass to Umago. Helping them was his dad Antonio who, one night, took them in his boat to a pine forest close to Cittanova, where they remained hidden for three weeks: in the midst of bushes, washing themselves summarily with sea water, and eating, when the father of another boy managed to reach them with a bit of food. Until one night, always with the support



Anteo Padovan's school time in Cittanova

of Antonio's boat, they escaped to Trieste. Anteo found a place to stay with his aunt and went to work at the port. The matter seemed to be closed. But not for him. In the local daily newspaper, he found the news that the deserters of the Yugoslavian army could go home, condoned. Having found out that a friend of his, who had gone back, had not faced anything serious, Anteo, although perplexed, decided to go back to Cittanova. Always with the help of his father and his boat. Before leading a normal life, for his safety he remained hidden at home for a month. In the end he found his sea and his fishing again. In 1951, there was his marriage to Anna Stancich – a native of Grisignana, from the area called the white lands – then the birth of their two children... Always in Istria and always hoping in a happy solution for the Free Territory.

However, when they placed the stone, to mark the border, at Albaro Vescovà – no longer zone A and B – everybody went crazy with applications... Anteo gets carried away. Like farmigole (ants) – Anna intervenes. And perhaps four families remained in Cittanova – concludes Anteo – and perhaps not.

He hoped to be able to leave together with his brother on the boat, but he was allowed to go to Trieste, with his family, just two months after. Onto a truck their things and their furniture, destined to become part of the historical household furnishings of the old port... *and then we found ourselves in a big box in Campo Marzio. Women and children on one side, men on the other. After a while we were sent to Opicina. But what do you mean, the farmers to Campo Marzio and the fishermen to Opicina?*

His life as a fisherman, nevertheless, resumed with his glorious boat. He highlights the help received from Italy, which allowed him to receive family cheques and a contribution in order to be able to convert the motor of the boat from gasoline to diesel. He still went through a few bad times when, during a fishing expedition, though still being in Italian territorial waters, he was captured by the *militia* of Capodistria. The matter was resolved with a stay of three days, a fine and the confiscation of two tonnes of fish.

He made the decision to emigrate. *The Canadian envoys had promised us a house, furniture, school bus – recalls Anna. While we were getting ready for the departure, the possibility to be hired as municipal worker and accommodations in Muggia arose – adds Anteo. It was a month of sleepless nights, asking ourselves what was the right thing to do. In the end he opted for Canada: two years to try it out, four at most, and then we come back. ...and we are still here.*

Upon arriving at the farm, what upset Anna most was the accommodations that were assigned to them: everything old and decrepit, a table with three legs and in place of the cupboards, some shelves. There was no running water in the house,

even less a toilet. Following the indications of the farmer, where he had shown her where to keep produce fresh, she used a kind of hollow in the ground: she found all of her supplies eaten up by ants and worms. *Only I know how much I cried and suffered because of that situation. Still now I shudder at it* – Anna remembers. *You couldn't say what colour the mattresses were: dirty, with old urine stains; on old nets that were all rusty. How could one sleep on those beds? I was 30 years old, but the children were 6 and 7.* There were, however, no ways to get out: there was only that and we had to adjust to it.

Work in the fields instead did not frighten her. She was born and raised in a poor and large family. She was always used to toil: from the countryside in Istria to cleaning work in Trieste. She managed to put in 75 hours of work in a week, but preferred agricultural work to work shifts in other sectors: when she would go home she could find herself with her husband and children. *I did not know the language, I did not have money, I did not have a profession, but I had my family with me.*

Even Anteo worked in the fields for a few seasons: he who loved the sea found himself in the countryside picking 500-600 containers of tomatoes a day. Then he worked in the building sector.

A bit at a time, with the learning of the language, with working improvements and nevertheless with many sacrifices, in 1967 they managed to buy a house and a car; and the year after, to see Cittanova once again. Throughout the years then, they returned there again five or six times.

The fragrance of the sea continues to fascinate Anteo, who almost every year goes to pay a visit to fellow townsmen of his residing in Vancouver: *passere, sfoie* (typical Adriatic flat fish)... *con la tognà (fishing hook)*... *my goodness how many of them...*

Thinking back to the journey undertaken, they define themselves as pioneers. *It was Istrian courage which made us hold tight* – they now say with pride.

Who would believe it? it is a story of the 20th century.

ALBERTO AND GIULIANA BABICH

The best land – where we were born – we had to leave – is the thought that Alberto Babich addresses to Istria from Chatham, where he arrived in 1959, on the wave of the big musical torment of the time – *The little house in Canada*, which made him augur well for his future.

A native of Isola, where he was born in 1933 in a family of six children, his memory connects his childhood to the countryside. Though attending school, the

kids had to miss class many times in order to help their parents with work on the farm. Even the house was in the middle of the fields: two-storey house, with thick walls, the rooms above and the kitchen below. And with the fruits of their farming toils they would live: *bread, wine, “polenta”...*

The countryside was even a refuge, during the war: *everybody was fleeing and we were scared, I was 11 years old. If the war had not gone as it went, we Istrians would have still been in Europe, instead we had to scatter throughout the world.*

During the postwar period, after having alternated his working commitment between the fields and construction, he wound up at the Arrigoni factory – fish canning sector – where he had the opportunity to get to know his future wife. The girl was called Giuliana Mohorcich: fifteen years old, she had arrived at Isola in order to work in the factory from her native Brezzi, a hamlet of Puzzele. Alberto looked out towards the world and, even following the exhortation of his mother, in October of 1956 he decided to stay in Trieste, where – when he could – he would integrate his income with some jobs in the surrounding countryside. The first accommodations were in the refugee camp of Noghere. Odd jobs in construction, at the Faccanoni quarry, at the Aquila, in Borgo San Sergio. Until a few months later he was reached by Giuliana: the wedding in the church on Vasari Street, a sublet room, a child... the decision to leave for Canada. It was the 13th April of 1959: they boarded the m/v Vulcania with a few suitcases and a lot of hope. *I was 19 years old, it was not a slight step to leave our land, my family – his wife intervenes. But in order to overcome discomforts and nostalgia, my youth and the love for my husband were of great help.*

An experience followed, practically a mirror of many other stories: Halifax, the train, the precarious accommodations, the hard work in the sugar beet fields, the house, the birth of another child. Until the definitive occupational settling for the both of them, at Domtar, a factory producing tetra-pak containers and similar items.

The existence of life, after 45 years in Canada, is satisfying. There were many visits to Istria, where the family members live. *But I would not change a thing in my journey – concludes Giuliana. My desire to discover the world has lead me here, but seeing Istria again makes me appreciate the beauty of what I have left – concludes Alberto.*

We will even tell our granddaughter about it. ...In Italian.

STELIO AND GINA BERNARDI

Ever since Stelio was a child he wanted to discover what was beyond the sea. A curiosity which he already manifested at the age of four, losing himself in the salt works after he had distanced himself from the house of Malio, above Isola – where he was born in 1936 – in order to be able to see close at hand a ship that was loading salt. Or that other time still, when he ran to the port in order to try to reach his parents on the lugger which ran a connection service with Trieste, and where his parents had promised to take him to.

His father sailed for Lloyd Triestino, his mother worked at the Arrigoni factory; there were three siblings, at the time. Although coinciding with the years of the war, the childhood years were not particularly trying. The Germans had requisitioned their house, but they shared their surplus food rations with them.

The passion for the sea first lead him to nautical studies and then to a job as a mechanical engineer. The atmosphere that could be felt at Isola in the 1950s, was, however, not all that healthy to Stelio, who was beginning to crave to leave. In June of 1956, the decision to go to Trieste. His memories and his dreams were in a bag. In the refugee camp of Opicina he began a new life, destined to cross quite soon with one Gina Reganzin. She had arrived in Trieste the year before, from Villamorosa (in the vicinities of Grisignana) – where she was born in 1938 – with tragic memories of the war at her shoulders: the atmosphere of fear, her grandfather killed by the Germans in 1944, her grandmother who soon after died of heartbreak... Family life until the outbreak of the war was calm. A classical patriarchal farming family: maternal grandparents, parents, four children. The countryside, the barn and the henhouse guaranteed the necessary. The new big shock to their existence arrived with the changes of the postwar period. She had to learn Croatian at school, but her parents always continued speaking Italian and to get together with the people of Grisignana, who continued to speak Italian. Gina “when she would become big” wanted to become a teacher, without however having imagined that one day instead she would have had to leave her town. Especially for her father, the new reality was tight and, in fact, he was the first to leave for Trieste. In 1955, even Gina and her two sisters decided to follow him. From the refugee camp of San Sabba to the one of Padriciano, it was a journey fragmented into many stopovers, in which even a living reality perhaps not all that well-known is discovered, or be it the accommodations at 8 Vecellio Street: a big welcoming room for women had been organized on a floor, one for men below. *There was food, there was a bed. It was enough for us at that age* – Gina smiles. Without still understanding the reason for the continuous

movements, the girls after a while found themselves transferred to the camp of Opicina. For Gina, after a professional training course through the Italian Workers' Catholic Association, work even arrived at the Snia Viscosa at Punto Franco. She thought that she had arrived at the beginning of her future. But she had calculated things without Stelio. He, who back then was working in construction, the surprise with the news that her request for expatriation – before their encounter – had been accepted. *It had not been simple* – explains Bernardi – *because it was prevalently agricultural manpower that was required, while I offered myself as a mechanic. I had even applied for South Africa, but the OK came from Canada.* In order to be able to leave together, they accelerated the times and got married on Valentine's Day of 1960 in the church of Queen of the World on Carsia Street, built the year before. Blessing the marriage was the parish priest, Father Giovanni Gasperutti, who throughout the years has kept a strong tie with the Istrian Canadian community. Though in the perplexity of the unknown which they were facing, on the 18th April they left aboard the m/v Vulcania. *Even a brand new broom and two plastic basins in the luggage* – they make clear with irony. It was practically their honeymoon, but in separate cabins: men on the one side, women on the other. On the 1st May they landed in Halifax, surprised by the whiteness of the snow – which they did not expect to find during that season – in stark contrast with the greyness of the new reality that they were facing. On the train to Chatham, at every stop they were hoping that that would be their destination, but in the end they arrived: - *May God help us* – was their first thought. In the general routine of settling down, it was not all that bad: a first little wooden house that was quite acceptable, work in the fields, alternating with work in a factory, the happy encounter with a family of Belgian emigrants, of essential friendly support in the beginning. Stelio, however, did not want to unpack the trunks, *in order to be ready to return to Italy.* As a matter of fact, he never decided not to return: *the trunks are still down in the basement.* Upon the first visit to Italy, however, in 1968, he understood that it would not have been possible to go back. Thanks to his definitive employment in the truck factory, they had the possibility to build a house for themselves – with their own hands, in the real sense of the word. The income received with a hypothetical sale of the house would have, however, given the possibility to buy only land in Trieste. And they went back to Chatham.

Sunday and free time did not exist right from the beginning. They would only go to church at Easter, Christmas or for funerals, because working also on Sundays, there was not even time to go to Mass. There was little free time, but there were even some happy occasions: like, for example, the dances amongst fellow townspeople. And after, with the evening which would continue in the home of someone else from

the group, playing the accordion and feasting Istrian style. Later on, we began to organize the picnic.

The telephone in those days was a luxury, with prohibitive usage costs. The contacts with their people, beyond the ocean, were kept by letter writing. The first expenses of the Bernardis were the purchase of a table and chairs, followed by a washing machine, a car and then a television. The car was indispensable in order to be able to go to work. The television was the only possibility for relaxation.

Coming to Canada was like being reborn a second time, all alone and with one's own strengths – the conclusion of the Bernardis. Various were their trips to their country of origin, but at this point their roots have crossed the Atlantic Ocean. Their two children – already married – are fascinated by Istria, which they visit, however, as tourists.

A trip aboard the m/v Vulcania – 45 years ago – made Stellio see what lies beyond the sea.

CLAUDIO AND MARIUCCIA BERTOCCHI

I lived close to the sea – the most beautiful corner of the world. My life was on the beach, I was like a dolphin, always in the water playing with the waves or in a boat. ...Unfortunately, life designed my destiny differently and at the end of the war we lost Istria and her beautiful lands... Mariuccia Delise in Bertocchi still sighs with a lot of nostalgia, thinking about Isola – where she was born, or about San Simone, where the family then moved to.

Her father worked at the Ampelea factory and her mother at the Arrigoni factory, the two famous canning industries of Isola, a very widespread occupational headquarters for its inhabitants. During the period of the war, times had been difficult, but they had always managed to feed themselves: they had a piece of land which her father farmed, there was a pig in the barn...

When the war was over, the family was filled with joy. They continued to hope up until 1954 that the last act of the peace treaty would have reconnected them to Italy. Having become aware instead that a new reality would have imposed itself, or better still, that the one already experienced during the 9 years of Yugoslavian administration would have continued – at first having been defined as provisional – they decided to cross the border which by then had separated them from Italy. *Before the closures of the blockades we were always in contact with Trieste and when we were hampered from it, we felt as if we were lost* – she explains. The column of trucks

and other means of fortune, filled with things and people, which everyday left their own homes and headed towards the city, became daily news.

Mariuccia was very young. She had just met Claudio, the boy from Bertocchi (just like his surname), who within a short while would become her husband. They decided to get married before leaving, in order not to be separated. She was 18 years old, he was a year older.

They headed towards Trieste, with the entire Delise family: grandfather, parents and Mariuccia's two sisters. The furniture was left with an acquaintance, who lived in a small house between Scaglioni alley and dei Porta Street. They instead found



The three Delise sisters on the m/v Saturnia sailing towards Canada

accommodations in the refugee camp of San Giovanni, in the rooms of the old stables of the Americans: men on one side, women on the other, the walls not reaching the ceiling, the bunk beds, which Mariuccia would hate from then on. Occasionally, the two small families managed to settle into the two small apartments which existed in the small house which had welcomed the furniture. Small and modest accommodations, but with a breathtaking view over the gulf of Trieste: *we would see the port, the arrival of the boats, the city which shone with the reflections of the sea...*

In terms of work, there was not all that much. Claudio would accept occasional jobs: in the summer he would be a painter, during the winter he would take care of deliveries for the fruit and vegetable market. Her father and brother would let themselves be influenced by the flattering prospects from Canada, arriving as a second or third choice, after the closure of the migratory contingents for the USA and Colombia.

It was 1959: medical checkups, x-rays, check up of the eyesight. *On Baciocchi Street, where the emigration office was, all of us who were leaving were like lost rabbits. I, in particular, was not prepared to leave Trieste* – continues Mariuccia. In the end they sold the furniture waiting for the time to board the m/v Saturnia – as she says – *with few clothes in the suitcase, pots and dishes in trunks, a lump in the throat saying goodbye to family members at the Maritime Terminal.*

She still recalls her discomfort after the stopover in Naples. A crowd of emigrants embarked, with behavioural attitudes so different from theirs: children dressed like friars as a votive offering, mothers who publicly breastfed their little ones, without modesty. The cohabitation during the crossing was not easy. Even the agitated sea was added: she and her husband – who had always rode the waves – had a stomach which distinguishingly put up with the situation, but which at a certain point instead had to deal with the traces of the uneasiness, which other passengers were leaving along their paths.

There was snow upon their arrival in Halifax. The first impression was not one of the best: upon their landing a big ugly rusty room, a whole line of emigrants silently waiting for suitcases and trunks, then the carrying out of customs formalities, the people in charge of welcoming, who in English would ask them the usual questions. *...place and date of birth, origin, health conditions, members of the family... luckily they then called an interpreter* – the narrative goes on.

There was even the clash with new tastes, incompatible with the ones experienced by them. They received some sandwiches with salted butter. They tried to drink a coffee: impossible to swallow, it tasted so much like a horrible nothing. They went to buy some bread: they only found the usual loaf bread – practically imitation

stucco – even colliding with an unpleasant odour. *If this is Canadian bread, we will die of hunger* – was his mother's conclusion. Halifax was dark, terribly gloomy, the skyscrapers grey... Even the weather was grey. And it was only the beginning.

They took them to the train with a bus, *more suitable for the transportation of livestock than of people* – was Mariuccia's memory. Completely packed with people, completely dirty, all black. *We had clean clothes on, I was wearing summer gloves, that were in fashion, of a cream coloured mesh. ...and then to find oneself on that troop train...*

Once in Chatham, there were the farmers with whom the emigrants had contracts. As soon as they arrived however, nobody knew where and with whom they should have gone. It was necessary to wait in order to be called, in a kind of roll-call. The farmers would arrive in big and beautiful American cars, in total contrast to their appearance: boots dirty with manure, worn out jeans, dirty vests... the overalls worn for only God knows how many days in order to go to work in the fields.

The Delise Bertocchi were assigned to an old wooden house, manifestly uninhabited for quite sometime: dust and abandonment reigned inside, everything was dirty, there were only old things. The toilet was outside, practically a hole in the ground with four walls around. They did not have adequate working clothes, because in the optic of going towards a better future, they had thrown away the old clothes before the departure.

They began to clean the house. On the first floor, there were three little rooms, the mattresses stained and stinking. Mariuccia poured a bottle of perfume over it, before spreading out her beautiful new bed sheets. But the stench continued to come back...

When summer was over, they had to move to an apartment in the city, because the hovel which they had in some way restored, had to be heated up. And the winter to be faced was no joke.

They all worked in the fields for a while. Then, in search of a job consistent with his training, her husband got over the initial linguistic difficulties, by giving a practical demonstration of his capacities as a painter: he was immediately hired. After a few years, he had the possibility of starting up on his own, by even getting his father-in-law involved; and till now he continues his work with satisfaction.

Mariuccia experienced the hard life in the fields for twenty years. *My son grew up in the middle of tomatoes. I collected so many of them, that my knees still bear the consequences of it today: with difficulty I manage to climb the stairs. I was not used to that toil. In Istria, I had never done that kind of work, I only used to pick up few potatoes in my father's field* – she highlights.

It was a hard, tiring life, faced with great strength of will: *we had to do it, because we were without money. The first two years of work, by contract, were used in order to reimburse the trip to come here. But it was thought that, afterwards, it would have been possible to go back with a bit of savings. One year after another, we understood that things were going differently.*

The beginnings of an emigrant's life are not easy for anybody. But, having overcome the difficulties, the situation improved and everybody managed to have a home of his own – the serene conclusion.

After many years, Mariuccia now manages to imagine an existential hypothesis without Canada. Her husband, at the time a promoter of the Atlantic crossing, is the one who today instead feels a greater nostalgia. Both have returned to Istria many times. For her, the changes that have come about have made her feel a bit of a foreigner in her own native land. For Claudio instead, Bertocchi remains his home.

But Canada now means his son and grandchildren.

ROBERTO AND GRAZIA CIMORONI

Their experience sums up the drama endured by this extreme north-eastern strip of Italy: from the exodus, to the postwar vulnerability of Trieste, to emigration.

His father Giuseppe – a native of Trieste and at the time the cycling champion together with Giordano Cottur – after his marriage to a girl from Albaro Vescovà (then a hamlet of Muggia), decided to open up a bicycle store in Fiume, where in 1935 Roberto was born and his sister seven years later. Cimoroni's dad had chosen the capital of the Quarnero region for his commercial activity because, unlike Trieste, that area was not sufficiently equipped with such a kind of service and so it offered good potentialities for development. The shop was situated in the vicinities of the Public Garden, he owned the house, life was marked by a discreet wellbeing. Roberto didn't spend his first childhood only in Fiume, because he frequently stayed in Trieste, visiting his little cousins and uncles and aunts. The memories of the war years instead belong to Fiume, often connected with fear, because of the bombardments and precipitous escapes. The postwar period was covered with the melancholy, as a consequence of the definitive removal from one's own house and from one's own existence, practically imposed by the arrival of Tito's regime. Among the various vexations experienced, the seizure *in the name of the people* of 16 new bicycles, saved in the attic of the house, which probably ended up as personal benefit of the confiscators. The bitterness was increased by discovering among them people whom his father had helped.

It was the end of 1946. In February, the clauses the Treaty of Paris would have definitively distorted the distinguishing marks of the region.

His dad was known by about everybody and almost everybody – who was forced to abandon one's own house – met for a last goodbye, amidst tears and hugs. The detachment from Fiume was very sad: the handing over of the keys to the new bosses, the few personal effects loaded onto a truck, the departure.

In Trieste, the first accommodations were at Aquilinia, with his mother's sister. His father found work at the Marcon Company, a bicycle shop in Hospital Square. Roberto, after his studies at the Duca d'Aosta school and a few evening courses at Servola, was hired by the Aquila Company. In the meantime, the call of his very sportive DNA made itself felt: racing for the ACEGAT and for Inter, between 1951 and 1953 he became the cycling champion in the juniors' sector.

There was still a lot of nostalgia for the period in Trieste, both in Roberto's words and in the ones of his wife – Grazia Cok – known through common friends, during one of the many dancing appointments then possible in the city. *Trieste was alive* – they remember – *there were a lot of choices of dance halls: ENAL, Paradiso, Marinella...*



Roberto's dad Giuseppe Cimatori – a native of Trieste and cycling champion at the time together with Giordano Cottur – opened up a bicycle shop in Fiume

They decided to start a family, settling in the old house of his grandfather at Albaro Vescovà, used free of charge by a far distant relative, who however expected a sum for relinquishing tenancy rights in order to move out. The amount, together with the expenses for the restructuring of the building, wiped out the young couple's savings. But a bitter practical joke soon came. With a nightly raid, Tito moved the borders in his favour, annexing even Albaro Vescovà. Once again the Cimatori family found themselves thrown out of their own home. And with further economic difficulties, deriving from the arising Suez crisis which delayed the arrival of the oil tankers, and so slowed down work at the refinery, where Roberto was employed. His wife, already a hairdresser in a big salon, in the arcade at 24 Carducci Street, could only work part-time after the birth of her first son.

Starting with his father Giuseppe, the idea of finding a solution for the whole family in the USA went on delineating itself. With the temporary closure of the emigration to the United States, the alternative of Canada presented itself. ...A common refrain renewed itself and even the Cimatori found themselves saying: *a few years and then we'll be coming back, just in time to make a bit of money and to come back home in tranquillity...* How many times these words accompanied the story of every single migratory experience! Even the voices of Grazia and Roberto in unison were



May 1959. Souvenir photograph left by the Cimatori to Grazia's mother

interrupted by a lump of emotion, recollecting those moments and the far distant illusion of their short stay in the country of the land of plenty.

It was May of 1959. Before leaving, they left their photo as a souvenir for Grazia's mother. In the trunks there was a bit of everything, even ski boots. The skis instead, still new, were sold to a nearby neighbour. *Who knows when we would have been able to go skiing again!?* – the story. All of the wedding presents, which unfortunately would have all arrived broken at their destination, were even a part of their baggage.

And finally the boarding of the m/v *Saturnia*, together with Roberto's family members; the aim was the hope to improve. *What supported us was above all our young age but for our elderly people it was hard to think of going towards the unknown, revolutionizing their own life once again.*

The crossing, as more or less often happened, was not bad: it almost served to put one's thoughts on standby but a big shock awaited them upon their arrival, due to the impact with a completely different reality, very far from the best of conjectured hypotheses.

They did not know the language, they did not even know the exact destination, whose name – Chatham – was pronounced in the most disparate ways. All they knew was that they would have had to go work in the countryside, because in order to be admitted for emigration they had to declare themselves as being farmers, despite Roberto's professional experience as a welder and Grazia's as a hairdresser.

They were assigned to a farm, with accommodations in a crumbling house. Roberto managed to save himself from work in the fields, hired by a company that was constructing highway 401, the highway that was longitudinally crossing Canada. Grazia instead, for almost a decade found herself working in the immensity of those fields, cultivating tomatoes, sugar beets, tobacco, cucumbers. She did not drive, thus her husband would take her to work before going to his own job: at five o'clock in the morning and together with the little children (at that time three, but later they had two more).

The first return to Italy – in 1963 – was for Grazia a great temptation not to go back to Canada. During that holiday, the third child had turned one year old; he began walking a day before their return... *When I arrived in Rome and saw the airplane that was going to take me away...* still today the memory of that moment makes her voice tremble and interrupts her story.

But they came back, because bit by bit, their future was taking shape beyond the ocean: for Roberto in a truck factory, where there was adequate employment for his professional training and where he worked for thirty years; for his wife hired as a superintendent in the gas company. She worked there for twenty years, using her

shift from 5 o'clock in the afternoon until midnight, in order to be able to take turns with her mother-in-law and husband in looking after the children.

The learning of English surely contributed towards easing her insertion into her social and working life. *In Chatham it was much more difficult than in Toronto, where the presence of Italian emigrants and shops was massive. Here nobody spoke our language* – they tell. Grazia has a grateful thought for a colleague of hers of Friulian origin, who precisely in order to allow her to have a quicker acquisition of the language, never spoke to her in Italian.

Parallel to the younger Cimatori's Canadian life, the one of the senior developed too. The dad Giuseppe, after a period in construction, worked with a baker. He probably made him discover a better quality of bread, if one thinks of the loaf one found at the time of the landing... The Cimatori mum above all dedicated herself to her role as a grandmother. As soon as she had the possibility, they would make a return to Italy every year, prolonging their stay each time.

With his father, Roberto re-founded the Chatham soccer team, which he joined upon the invitation of his friend Bartole. The already existing one had absolutely unacceptable playing strategies. After the Cimatori took on its organization, for a few years the team – at first with the name of Italy and then of Inter-Chatham – never lost a game, participating later on in the championships of a quite wider scope.



The goodbye to relatives before boarding the m/v Saturnia (from the Cimatori family album)

That team even marked the start of the Istrian League, the association of Istrian emigrants of Chatham which in September of 2004 celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of its foundation. Quite soon, in fact, the weekly after-games transformed themselves into a further goal of carefreeness; an awaited occasion in order to get together among fellow countrymen, with the involvement of the entire family, perhaps with a dinner or a dance... and the meetings, in brief, became the basis for the association. As almost always and everywhere it happened in the world of emigration, it was a way in which to feel less alone and less far from one's own land.

The sheets which have flown from the Cimoroni family's calendar of Canadian life are now more or less 17,000 in number. The parents and sister of Roberto are no longer around, Grazia and Roberto have found a new dimension, determined even by the fact that their 5 children have integrated themselves into the new reality: Jenny is the vice principal of a school in London. Denny is a valued sports lawyer, Roby is an engineer in Vancouver, Sandra is responsible for the investment sector of a bank. Maurizio is the only one who lives in Chatham and works in the factory where his father had worked. Everybody more or less understands the dialect of Trieste, but they speak English, because that is the language of the new families which they have created.

Life runs serenely along the banks of the Thames River, amidst the meetings with long time friends, the activity of the Club, a few trips towards milder climates,



Roberto Cimoroni re-founded with his father the Chatham soccer team

especially during the winter season, a few hobbies. For Roberto it is moose hunting, with a trip every year that takes him 1,600 kilometres away from home, inside the forest at the shoulders of a Great Lake.

Frequent in these years have even been the returns to Trieste, visiting family members and friends. In February of 2005, Roberto had an emotional surprise of meeting up with an old pedalling companion: Ramiro Orto, architect, sports journalist, but above all his long time friend *Remi*. A great emotion for both of them when they were able to hug each other again, after more than 45 years.



February 2005. After more than 45 years a surprise meeting between old pedalling companions: Roberto Cimoroni and Ramiro Orto

THE PRELAZ FAMILY

Until you don't try something else, you are happy with what you have – is the philosophy of life with which Ida Giacobani widow Prelaz looks at her past in Istria, where she was born at Oscurus, close to Momiano, in 1933. Her childhood in a small town with mum, dad, two brothers and two sisters; school and even work in the fields, in the vineyards or for the harvesting of olives. With the war, everything began to change. There was little food – bread and polenta, always at risk of being seized either by the partisans or by the Germans – and a lot of fear. With the postwar period, the hard times changed, but did not end: we were not allowed to go to Trieste in order to buy anything, it was not possible to sell the produce of the land, in the town's shops there was nothing to buy. *I don't know how we managed to carry on* – she is wondering even today. Very young, at the age of 20, Ida got married to Bruno Prelaz, a young man from a neighbouring town called Merischie. Their efforts to remain in their places of origin, failed due to the immeasurable taxation which the Tito regime had imposed upon their land. *Even if we had managed to sell all of the harvest, it would not have been enough to pay those amounts. We could not manage to survive.* In 1956, they followed the example of the rest of the Prelaz family, who had already taken refuge in Trieste for a few years: by simulating a visit to relatives, Ida and Bruno left, with two small children and a few personal effects. After various ups and downs, their accommodations were in a shack in the Opicina camp: a small stove in order to warm up something edible, minestrone to be picked up with mess tins at the area's soup kitchen, a bunk bed for the whole family – parents on top, children below. Her husband would take care of himself by taking occasional jobs in the building sector, she would go to serve in a family's home, alternating with a friend of hers – she too a young mother – taking care of their own children. During that time the promotion supporting the emigration to Canada was particularly active in the camp. *People believed to the promises, they did not ask for details, they thought about the Istrian countryside, without imagining the precarious accommodations and the hard working conditions, which were awaiting us* – Ida tells. *Had they known it before, probably half of those who came here, would have never left. Instead, in 1959, we too boarded the m/v Vulcania. To begin with, there was a 200 dollar debt – for the reimbursement of the trip fare – and not even 20 dollars in our pockets. Once arrived, 15 dollars had to be paid for the rent in the first farm...* Her husband comforted her by saying that, once having put aside a small amount of savings for the fare, they would have gone back to Italy. Instead year after year, they realised that there was no chance to return home and they began to give up hope. Later their situation improved allowing them the purchase of a farm, to run on

their own. This had turned out to be a successful business. The family increased: with the birth of twin in 1964 and of another son in 1969, for a total of five boys. Though having assimilated English, until Bruno was alive, the only language spoken at home remained Italian.

Emigration experienced by a child is the one that transpires from the narrative of Edy, one of the sons of the Prelaz parents. *I don't remember anything about Italy and the refugee camp, nor about the trip. I was too small – he begins. When in 1994, I saw once again the very little that remained of the collection centre, I did not feel great emotions. I got to know my childhood of those years through my father's stories. He would tell me about family stories and events from Istria; he spoke to me about his melancholy for having to give into abandoning his own land; even about the first meeting with my mother and the long journeys on foot in order to be able to accompany her to the dance.*

He instead remembers well his first Canadian years and the endless work in the fields, which got the whole family involved. *Even children worked in the field, up and down the rows of sugar beets.* Edy was four years old and he did not know how to count: his father taught him to put a tomato into a basket, for every container filled up. It was a system in order to save time and not to have to go back, to calculate the number of filled up cases. Having reached school going age, he continued to help his parents in the plantations, after school and on weekends. *Until 1970, life was made up of hard sacrifices. Dad even ended up being employed on three job fronts: in construction and as a waiter in a hotel, besides in the fields on the weekends. During the winter, there was the tobacco factory, the sugar factory or the fish canning industry.*

In the years immediately following the arrival, life was decidedly Spartan; relaxation and pastimes were practically inexistent: for the first ten years just a sporadic dance from time to time – on the occasion of some feast – and sports at school. For the rest, just lots and lots of work, seven days a week. *The first year at school was sad because of the language; I still remember now the patience and the help of a nun.*

Edy's eyes light up, when he mentions his father's satisfaction when he bought his farm: *we had lost our countryside in Istria, but we had managed to have our piece of farming land in Canada.* From the initial 25 hectares and a production sufficient for the family's needs, they reached the present 1,000 acres, with the involvement of about a hundred workers and contracts with the biggest entrepreneurial companies of the food sector. In more recent times even meat production has added itself to agricultural production. Everything in the light of modern technology and out of total respect for the norms in place for the safeguarding of workers: from comfortable accommodations to safety, from a cap on maximum working hours to the day of rest. Completely different times from *the dusk to dawn day.*

Since 1996, the other Prelaz brothers have remained in the farming industry, because Edy took over the “Rossini Restaurant”, which belonged for 50 years to a family of Friulian emigrants: it is a classy place, which serves the best Italian cuisine to its clientele. In order to better enter into his new role, in 1998 he even took a six month course in Italian cuisine in Turin. *But the best and incomparable lesson* – these are his words – *were the following three months spent in the kitchen of Mario Suban in Trieste.*

Even if he was uprooted at a very young age from Istria, Edy Prelaz remembers his first visit to his hometown – at the age of forty - as an emotional occasion in order to reconnect with his own history and his own affections, which he recognized from his father’s stories. He got to know his cousins; with them he visited the family’s old home, abandoned and emptied, together with many other buildings around there, scattered like in a ghost town, benefited for the first time in 1994 by the connection of the water mains. He visited the family grave, where his paternal grandparents had placed the photograph of his father, buried however in Canada.

In turn Edy now tells his daughter about Istria: he would like to take her to visit it, together with his wife.

I am an Istrian who lives in Canada, but very much tied to Istria – is his conclusion.



The endless work in the fields got the whole family involved. Moments of the harvesting of asparagus (from the Padovan family album)

CARLO AND EMILIA ROTA

An Istrian father, a mother from Trieste, Carlo Rota – born in 1940 – thinking about his childhood years, remembers a numerous family – his parents, 4 sons and 3 daughters – who, having overcome the turmoil of the war, had experienced a brief illusion of existential tranquillity. His father was the owner of a company which produced pipes for aqueducts. Work was not in short supply, so the initial workshop of Parenzo spread out into another two branches: one in Umago and the other in Capodistria. Carlo, after his studies, had followed his father in his activity. But all of this could not continue without the approval of the government system: Carlo's father, in fact, received a visit from the secret police, with the peremptory invitation to sign up to the Communist Party. Upon his refusal, everything was seized from him. *They were so severe* – the bit of a euphemistic term used by Carlo, in referring to the expression addressed by the government envoys to his father: *Rota, we'll let you go to Trieste, but barefooted*. Against the wall of political blackmailing, the plans and hopes of the family were shattered: from one day to another they had to abandon Istria and all their belonging. It was 1955. The accommodation was first in the refugee camp in Udine and then in Laterina - this one being the most uncomfortable of them all, with dilapidated shacks, in the middle of the cold and the mist of the countryside of Arezzo. But Carlo's father did not lose heart. He had himself liquidated from the camp and transiting towards Trieste, thanks to the indication of a Friulian acquaintance of his, he found accommodation and work in Mestre: both he and Carlo became tilers. Having acquired a new professionalism, subsequently they even managed to find a new dimension even in Trieste, beginning with the restructuring of the Trieste Warehouses on Oriani Street. And always all together: the family this time had found a dwelling in the basement of a friend. Things were going well, when they heard about the widespread promotion of Canada and of its potentials. They allowed themselves to be convinced that *in that country money grew on trees. In those days, by laying tiles, I was already earning 1,000 Italian liras an hour. In Canada, I would have only earned 50 cents and in what conditions... But who could say!* In 1959, they left aboard the m/v Vulcania.

Halifax, Chatham... and then the impact with a kind of livestock market. Only that it was them, the emigrants, who were in the shop window: *the farmers would examine us and then would make their choice, between one family group and another. Luckily, before leaving we had told a bit of fibs, saying that we had experience on the farm and knew how to drive tractors. We had never done it, but in the meantime I thought to myself: I will learn.* Carlo's father rebelled at the work in the fields:

I had thrown away my father's hoe and I did not come here in order to pick it up again – was his reaction.

Shortly after his arrival, his mother unfortunately got sick.

Bit by bit, from the sugar beets, the four brothers managed to recover their tile setting profession: first in a Friulian construction company, then by starting on their own and affirming themselves in the sector. They even improved their relations with the locals, who in the beginning looked at them with suspicion, because *they were convinced that we were gypsies; then they understood that our habits were better than theirs* – observes Carlo. Friendships even began to be born, a certain life of



Passenger ticket of the Italian Shipping Company, kept by Giovanni Riosa

relationship started, which contributed towards mitigating the nostalgia for home. And actually during a visit to common friends, Carlo met his wife.

Emilia Trento was born at Pizeti Cipiani, a hamlet of Umago, four houses in all. Orphaned by her mother already at the age of eight, hers was really a denied childhood. There were 7 siblings, of whom 4 girls, living under the tyranny of an alcoholic father. The weight of the family fell upon the shoulders of the girls, at the cost of not attending school: cows, pigs, chickens and the fields to look after, sheep to be taken to the pasture and to be milked, firewood to be collected in order to light up the fire, cheese and bread to be prepared. She was even denied the most simple enjoyments, punished by the violent rage of her father. It was no less when, in order to manage to buy the fabric in order to make her Confirmation dress, she went to work in a factory. Her father caught up with her in order to have the money handed over to him. She took refuge at her aunt's place, to whom she would regularly hand over her salary as a worker at the Arrigoni factory. Turning 18 years old, her aunt sent her to Trieste, working as a domestic in the house of a family. A paternal aunt of hers, already living in the refugee camp of Padriciano, convinced her to join her nucleus, departing for Canada. Emilia agreed and in 1960 she climbed aboard the m/v Saturnia.

Even in Canada, life was not simple in the beginning: *if there had been a road, more than one person would have walked home on foot* – was Emilia's thought. *Life was hard, we didn't know the language, we worked wherever we could for peanuts.* From life in the fields to cleaning a pub for 35 dollars a week, which she topped up by babysitting.

Married since 1961, Carlo and Emilia had four children and now they are the grandparents of 9 grandchildren. Unfortunately, the serenity reached was interrupted by the tears of the loss of a son in an airplane accident.

Various returns to Istria – the first in 1962 – still make them feel tied to the land of origin. Even the seeds of the little trees which, having grown, now welcome you to the Rota home, came from there.

ETTORE AND ALBINA COSLOVICH

Their life – perhaps the more opportune term would be their adventure – could be the plot of a fiction story, instead every reference is absolutely real.

Ettore, born in 1922 at San Nicolo di Umago, up until the age of 11 had to combine school attendance with helping out his father, with the work on their vast

piece of land: vineyards, olive groves, cereal, potatoes. He did not have particular plans about what he would do as a grown up. *In those days you would not dream a lot* – he observed. He lived with two sisters and a brother, besides his parents. ... and ever since he was an adolescent he revealed his liking for girls.

During his military service, the 8th September, 1943, found him convalescing at the hospital of Cervia. He had been admitted after simulating a high temperature, caused by using some garlic as a suppository. However, being in contact with authentically ill people he too was infected. Those admitted to hospital, surprised by the changed course of events in the war, were handed over to the Germans. Ettore wound up in a concentration camp at Stettino. Sent at first to work on a farm, living with some farmers who, all things considered, treated him well, he was then requisitioned by the TOT and sent to Dusseldorf to build bunkers. He was good in carrying out his work, and he even knew how to discreetly express himself in German. It was probably a premise in his favour, which went on to support the fortune – even on that occasion – of bumping into a certain humanity on the part of his boss, well disposed to the point of getting him some food. They lived in overcrowded wooden shacks: prisoners of every nationality, with 120 Italians. Upon the arrival of the Allied troops, they were forced to continue withdrawal marches, with stopovers in accommodations of fortune, assailed by swarms of lice. The irony of fate, contemporarily but reciprocally unknown, even his brother was a prisoner in Germany; just a few kilometres away. Liberated by the Americans, the boys discovered it upon their return to Umago, where they arrived in September of 1945, just a few days after each other, welcomed by the happy unbelief of their own family members.

At a dance the meeting with Albina, then seventeen years old, *who shortly would have made him abdicate his reputation as a womanizer*. After three months, in fact, they were engaged.

Even for Albina Medizza, born at Valizza in 1928 in a family of seven siblings, her childhood years turned out to be contrasting with the style of life which we have gotten used to, with implications which would surely be difficult to understand today. She was seven years old when her father, certainly not in affluent economic condition, thought about giving better existential possibilities to his eldest daughter, sending her to her grandfather's place in Argentina, who had emigrated down there with other daughters. In order to purchase the ticket for the trip, Albina's father had had 300 Italian liras lent to him. When the girl opposed her father's decision, her thirteen-year-old sister – perhaps taken up by a thoughtless adolescent enthusiasm – proposed to substitute her. At the moment of boarding the ship, however, she had

already regretted her decision and they almost had to make her climb aboard by force: *the 300 Italian liras debt for the trip could not have been thrown away like that*. Having arrived at the destination, due to some hitches in the contacts between the two family branches on this and that side of the Atlantic, the little girl found herself in the offices of the Shipping Company waiting for some unknown family member, who however never showed up. When the captain of the ship was about to take her back to Italy, one of her Argentinean aunts, who had casually heard about the arrival of her niece, showed up. ...Albina was able to get to know that sister of hers only at the age of sixty.

She grew up in Istria, grazing the animals and attending school off and on, even due to her weak health. The scenario of the war – *an entire continuous alternation between partisans, Germans, Italians* – did not spare her family: a sister killed by the Nazis, a brother who in order to avenge her death followed the partisans, died of pneumonia after having hidden himself in the middle of winter in the freezing waters of a river, a brother-in-law captured during a round-up and ending up in a concentration camp. In the end, her mother dying of heartbreak and she – a little more than an adolescent – looking after the men at home: her father and brothers, of whom the eldest was 30 years old, the youngest was 13. In order to manage to put something onto the table, she would integrate her housework by going to serve in a teacher's home.

The horizon could have cleared up after the encounter with Ettore, whom she married in 1949. But conditioning their lives were the impositions of the postwar regime which had entered in: *it was not possible to have anything, not even items from one's own work; in order to kill a pig it was necessary to ask for permission* – tells Albina. Her parents-in-law were against that reality and being unpopular with the new regime, had to take refuge in Trieste. There, in 1952, a daughter was born to Albina and Ettore. Three years later, in the midst of various ups and downs, they moved permanently to Trieste. They crossed the border separately, because from the moment of the issuing of the permit by the Yugoslavian authorities to go to Italy, they were given only 24 hours to leave. Albina on a truck, with her load of personal effects, mixed with demijohns of oil and hams, managed to cross the border. Ettore, who had received wrong information and had to take care of the sale of a few steers, arrived at the border at the expired time. He was able to reach his family three months later. *No house, no roof, no bed* – summarizes Albina, remembering their various temporary accommodations between the refugee camps, the room and kitchen shared with the parents-in-law and finally a modest flat rented in Cereria Street. A great worker, she committed herself right from the day after her arrival,

responding to an advertisement looking for domestic helpers. She even reached the point of looking after three houses a day. Through an employer of hers, a manager at the Aquila company (oil Company), she even managed to find a job for her husband, with a construction company working in that area. The little daughter attended the kindergarten run by the nuns at San Giusto. Hired as custodians of a villa at Servola, they were able to make use of accommodation in a small annex house. After an injury to her hand, which kept her unable to work, she was dismissed.

Her parents-in-law were thinking about America. Their daughters, who were in the USA married to American guys who had been stationed in Trieste during the Allied Military Government, sent enthusiastic news.

The whole Coslovich family decided to emigrate. *For the departure I bought a nice hat and the best dress from a leading shop* – Albina continues in her narrative. *But our destiny was fated.* She received the news that they were assigned one of the apartments reserved for the refugees, thanks to the kind help of a family that she had worked for. Too late! *If the stuff had not been on board, we would have stayed behind.* Mattresses, cushions, quilts had been packed into the trunks... Toys and the new bicycle of her daughter Dorina did not find any space instead: a hitch, which caused many tears at that time, and still now complaints. In the end they left: it was Easter Monday of 1960.

The trip was almost a cruise; the arrival in Halifax, covered in snow, was something completely different. They, however, had an advantage with their daughter's good grasp of English, who had learnt the language in Trieste, from her aunts' fiancés back then. It even turned out to be a valid help on the painful journey by train heading to Chatham. Amongst the various discomforts, the travellers complained of the excessive heat inside the carriages; but the heat would increase. Dorina had to explain to the people in charge of the train that *caldo* didn't mean cold, as understood by them.

Destined to the sugar beet plantations, because they were a small family, they ended up in a modest farm on the outskirts of Chatham: the house in a small shack, crumbling and dirty, without water, electricity and toilets, near a river and full of snakes. Luckily a friendly nearby family helped them for their basic needs.

From their first saving, 10 dollars were immediately used to pay for the purchase of a rowboat, which was needed to reach the fields on the other side of the river, where Albina worked for 29 years. *I dug, harvested fruit, cucumbers, tomatoes. ... In a month and a half I managed to harvest 9,500 baskets of tomatoes, which weighed 35 pounds each; I, perhaps barely managed to weigh 100 pounds... Ettore had found work as a bricklayer and I would accompany him every morning at seven o'clock,*

before taking my daughter to school and then to start my commitment in the fields. In the evening I would make the opposite trek.

The one who had an immediate satisfying impact with the new Canadian reality was little Dorina who, after a few months since her arrival, due to her preparation managed to obtain her admission into a class equal to the one that she had attended in Trieste.

The journey of the Coslovich was made up of various steps, constantly heading towards a better destination, gladdened by the birth of another child in Canada. Albina never stopped: from seasonal work in the fields, for many winters she went to the one in the tobacco factory, integrating it with tasks as domestic helper, which she still does; in the same family for over 24 years. She is always untiringly ready even to participate with enthusiasm in the various events of the Istrian association



The Coslovich family's first moments in Canada

in Chatham. Just a short notice is enough for her to prepare a menu for 100 people: from gnocchi to her very special cream puffs.

A laborious life in a serene narrative, exposed by an amiable and vital lady in the living room of a splendid house, built by her husband – in the true sense of the word – a little more than fifteen years ago, after his retirement. All around, the yard, very well looked after, extends itself as far as the eye can see. One can even find some little armchairs made out of interwoven twigs, which invite a person to moments of relaxation beneath a branchy tree: those too are the work of Ettore's hands.

There are dried hams and Istrian gastronomic specialties in the basement. Their life however is by now in Canada, although there are frequent visits to the land of origin and Albina's desire to make Italy known to her grandchildren.

SILVIO AND NADA COVACICH

I was born in 1941, in the same house where my grandfather, my father and my three brothers were born – Silvio Covacich exhorts with a point of pride – at San Pancrazio di Montona, which became Brkac under Yugoslavia.

A day does not go by in which his thought does not go back to the land of origin: to when he used to go to school, to the games, to the wooden carts... He was the youngest of four children, of whom were two males. His parents were farmers. They had steers, cows, they made wine which, before the war, they sold in Italy. Afterwards, it would have no longer been possible.

Bitter-sweet was his memory of the war, which he went through as a small child. The Germans had settled in the town's school; there was one, in particular, who would always bring candy for him. His mother, fearful of that contact, tried to hold her son back from that habitual visiting, telling him that he would have taken him away. The soldier – very young – wanted to calm her down: he too in Germany had a small child, whom by now he accepted that he would no longer see again. Spontaneously mother Covacich reasoned and consoled him: *the war would end, he would be able to return home...* The boy shook his head, his look was sad: he was sure that he would have died soon. In the meantime he continued bringing candy to Silvio. The regime that took over after the postwar period was strict to the Covacich family, whose original name – to be precise – had been Covacci until then: ration cards were needed to buy a dress and the produce from the fields had to be sold only to the Cooperative, which paid when and what it wanted... His father wanted to go away already in 1948, but he had to wait 10 years for the permit to leave.

Up until 1952, Silvio attended the Italian school, but gradually the Italian students at Montona were reduced. In order to be able to continue studying in his language, he would have had to go to Parenzo or Pola, but the economic possibilities of his family did not allow for it, thus the only alternative were to take classes with Croatian being the teaching language. *The handicap of not knowing the language made me finish the third year of junior high school. At the age of 16.*

His family was surviving in discomfort, which the summits of power often created perfectly for all of them. It even happened when, close to the grape harvest and the autumn sowing, his brother was called to arms contemporarily with his father – 52 years old – sent for three months to Sarajevo, for pseudo military service. *Perhaps forced labour would have been the right term* – Silvio observes. *They knew that they were the only arms for our fields, my mother had a broken leg, I was still young.* They tried to explain the situation to the leading figures, but they were unyielding. Help for the fields came from village friends.

Finally in 1956 the regulation was passed which allowed a person to leave Yugoslavia upon the payment of 12,000 dinars per person. Personal items but not real estate was allowed to be sold. In 1958, his father managed to pay, and on the 3rd January they were able to leave. About his plans, the man had only actually talked about it with a handful of close friends: *it was much more prudent to keep one's*



Souvenir of days lived in the land of origin by Silvio Covacich – a native of San Pancrazio di Montona

own mouth shut. They loaded themselves onto a truck, together with their household goods, their clothes and thirty litres of wine. It was the first time that Silvio arrived in Trieste and he was struck by it. The first address of hospitality was the house of an aunt of his, *who lived in a big house with a big garden, overlooking the graveyard*. After about ten days, there was the transfer to the refugee camp of Udine. A small apartment in a three storey barrack: two rooms for six people, the toilet in a corridor for 40 people, the shower upon appointment, once a week.

There was no money in order to continue studying and so Silvio began to work in a sawmill. An anecdote is connected to that time, better to listen to the voice of Covacich's good sense of humour.

A will to do something and a will to decide for himself– without his anxious mother knowing it – made him accept, for 2,500 Italian liras a week, to deliver firewood to homes, using a tricycle without brakes. His boss Toni had explained to him that in order to stop it was sufficient enough to put his heels on the rear wheel. A few days later a bus came at full speed along his delivery route. Out of fear, he jumped off letting his tricycle crash against the bus. There was panic amongst the bystanders in seeing the crushed tricycle and an anxious search for the hurt rider. He reappeared unhurt onto the scene amidst great incredulity. To the police who came to investigate Silvio did not tell that the tricycle had no brakes. He earned an orange beverage from Toni and the insurance paid for the purchase of a new tricycle.

Silvio's father worked for farmers. He had the possibility of moving his family nucleus to a small village of 53 houses, destined for refugees, between Maniago and Aviano: 11 hectares of land to be farmed and used for livestock. After 18 months, at the moment of signing a twenty-five year mortgage to confirm the contract of purchase, he backed out because he did not accept *the idea of having debts*. The family moved to Ronchi, except for Silvio who stayed back at a friend's place in Maniago, where he had found work in a knives' factory. He did not have great financial possibilities, but he was youthful: with his motorbike and his friends he would have fun and would run about a bit everywhere.

The idea of Canada began to creep into the family group. Silvio was against it, but his father decided: on the 18th April, 1960, they climbed aboard the m/v *Vulcania*. There was a bit of everything in the trunks, even six rolled up mattresses. His mother was of the opinion that it was impossible to travel without having a pyjama and so she bought him one. After having seen that even his cabin companions were not making use of it, young Covacich decided to go back to his old habits and took it off: but he still keeps that "strange piece of clothing" today as a souvenir.

He did not know anything about Canada, except that it was really cold and that it bordered onto the USA. He did not surely think that he was going to stay for good: the usual two years, in order to go back home after the first 2,000-3,000 dollars set aside. Halifax welcomed them on a very cold day, but without snow. The impact with an unknown language created disorientation. They climbed aboard the train: everything inside it was covered of at least four centimetres of dust. His father's morale began to give in, while his mother tried to face the unknown in a positive way. The train began to move and cross kilometres of snow.

Once in Chatham, their saga was not different from the previous ones. They spent the first night with about fifty new arrivals, all together, in the promiscuity of a big hall of the Sugar Company. The next day there was the selection of families by the farmers. The Covacich were excluded. Then they received a letter from the Sugar Company explaining them in Italian that there were not many employment opportunities and that the summer salary would have even had to cover the winter period. It ended with the uncertainty of the working destination and moral despondency. They had 300 dollars on them, the proceeds from the sale in Italy for all of their things. In the end, they were picked up by a fieldman, an employee of the Sugar Company, brusque and unpleasant in appearance due to a previous negative experience with Italian immigrants. He did not give them work but he provided them with an old hovel of his, at about twenty kilometres from the city and of characteristics in line with the ones previously encountered: crumbling, dirty, stinking, surrounded by a kind of garbage dump assailed by rats. No water, no toilet, three centimetres of dead flies on the floor. Once having got to know them a bit better, the owner of the house's behaviour changed and he turned out to be a really nice man. He found a truck and shovels in order to take away the garbage, he provided paint, ladders and brushes in order to paint the house. And he paid the Covacich for the work done. After a season amongst the sugar beets and a winter in the tobacco factory, the clan moved to the city. Always together. Actually, the family had even increased in number, with the marriage of one of the sisters, joined by her fiancé whom she had met in Friuli. The plan to return had however still not been put aside and in 1963 a brother and a brother-in-law thought about conducting a survey in Friuli in order to see the possibilities for a reinsertion.

Amongst hypotheses and uncertainties, a piece of land was bought for 2,000 dollars: it would be for the house to be built upon the return. It only remained a dream project, because gradually, one by one they chose to remain in Canada. The land, a few years ago, was resold for a hundred million Italian liras. But the Friuli region continued to mark the life of Silvio who, after a brief employment at Chrysler, found

his professional experience rewarded in a Friulian construction company operating in Canada.

Beside him since 1965 is his wife Nada, a refugee from Pirano since 1947, who arrived in Canada aboard the m/v Saturnia a year before Silvio, together with her parents and sister. What they had in common were the hope of a brief migratory stay for a better future, the grey and cold weather of Halifax upon their arrival and the strong desire to return home, the killing hard work in the fields. The metamorphosis of her own life already began with the way girls had to dress: in Italy, except for specific occasions, it was not common for women to wear pants and casual clothes, *and we had to wear coveralls* – sighs the lady. Until the moment of the change, to the adjustment into a new reality of Canadian lifestyle, which she realised bit by bit to belong to.

They are parents of two children – a boy and a girl. Nada and Silvio have returned on many occasions to visit their land of origin.

Everything is different over there, every hill has its church, a bell tower, from one hill you can see four or five other hills, while here in Canada everything is flat. There, from Montona one could see Visinada, one could see Portole, Levade, all around... if I could I would go back every year... is Silvio's conclusion.

NICOLÒ AND OLIMPIA MAIER

Two lives, one story. Natives of the outskirts of Capodistria – he in 1935 at Provè, she in 1937 in the district of San Marco – they have practically known each other forever.

For both of them, few were the years of carefree childhood, running free in the sweet smelling fields.

Nicolò's memory instinctively goes back to his childhood, thinking about the places of his roots: he sees his father once again, called to arms, on the steamship Italia taking the soldiers away and he remembers his own joyous surprise in discovering the red colour of Sicilian oranges, which his father had brought him during a leave. Memories become gloomy almost immediately, by reliving the bombardment of the Rex, the only Italian vessel to win the Blue Ribbon for a record transatlantic crossing. The Rex was hidden in a bay between Isola and Capodistria out of sight from the Allied airplanes. In September of 1944 instead, it was destroyed by the British during three raids. Nicolò saw the airplanes flying over his house and raging upon the ship; he saw the smoking hull for days, in the end reclining on the side. During

the postwar period, with the intention to eliminate the wreck, the Yugoslavs used a mine, which was so powerful that it blew up even all of the charges left on the spot by the Germans, scattering broken pieces as far as 6 kilometres away.

There were nine of them in the family: the parents and seven children. As long as it was possible, the boy attended an Italian school, but when the new policy gave him the only choice to attend a Slovenian school, he went with his father to work in the fields. He was 11 years old. Later on, he became a painter and then a bricklayer.

In 1954, an unpleasant episode accelerated his decision to leave his native land: after having been at the cinema, with two friends he was on the way to *Mensa n.1 of Capodistria*, where there was dancing.

Stopped along the road by the police, the two boys who spoke Slovenian were made to move on; Nicolò, who only spoke Italian, was given the choice of either returning home or going to prison, where his mother would have to go to pick him up. He decided to return home. On the next day he filed a request to go to Italy, to join his brother, who already moved to Trieste. He had to attach the list of his own things, which he wanted to take with himself. They allowed him to take three chickens with himself. Accompanying him up until the border was his fiancée Olimpia. She too, shortly after, left for Trieste with her parents.

Mondo was her family name. Hers was a large family too: *three boys and three girls, besides the parents and maternal grandparents* – she explains. Their economic condition was fairly good; there was a bit of land to farm, a few orchards... *I would never have imagined having to leave home. The Grio were family friends and they had a hair salon. I thought I could work there.* She attended the town's school, above Semedella, until the sixth grade. Under the new regime, it became impossible to autonomously manage the produce of the land. With the consequent economic hardship, it was impossible to buy six pairs of shoes for the children to go to school in Capodistria. Everybody had always studied and spoken Italian; they instead found themselves facing the imposition of a new language. It was 1954: the time to leave for Trieste – Italy.

The story was the same for all those compelled to leave their homeland: the packed truck, the household furnishings deposited at the silos while awaiting to recover them, the accommodations at Padriciano, the pavilions which gathered together more families, the partitions made with blankets. ... The Mondo mother went to work in the camp's canteen, her father in construction and Olimpia first at Villaggio del Fanciullo (boys home), then at the home of baroness Tripovich, where she had satisfying accommodations until she got married to Nicolò.

The honeymoon... was practically the transfer to the *silos* (warehouse used as a

refugee camp), where Nicolò was registered together with his family members, who in the meantime had reached him. *The apartment*, separated by wooden boards and covered with pieces of cardboard – for which he paid a monthly rent of 2,000 Italian liras – was subdivided into two rooms and a kitchen, separated by sheets of newspaper pasted on a wire net. There were six people who lived in it, all trustfully waiting for the assigning of a real apartment. But, like in an imaginary game of snakes and ladders, they found themselves having to start all over again. What happened was that in the next shelter the mother asked her son to bring a match to light up her cigarette; instead the boy lit up a piece of paper which consequently burnt the rooms and everything else that was along the way. Everything had to be redone, including the furniture. The laundry and toilets continued to be centralized, in common with tens of families.

A bitter irony: *non c'è due senza tre* (some things always go in threes). First by leaving Istria they lost all their personal items; second was the loss due to the fire in the *silos*; third they had to emigrate.

In Trieste, Olimpia had worked for a dentist until the birth of her first child. Her husband worked at the Savino Construction Company. Marked by familiar cordiality was the relationship with the owner, who even became the baptismal godfather of the newborn girl. But from Canada Olimpia's parents - who had previously migrated there – insisted that they join them. In 1960, the young family decided to accept the call. Not truly convinced. The day of boarding the m/v *Vulcania* was sad for everybody and tears were shed on board and on the pier.

The life in Canada was not a bed of roses, however today they can say that they are quite satisfied. Olimpia, although she was not used to the new type of job, worked for twenty years in the fields. *In Capodistria, at the most I would pick up only a bit of fruit. Here, in the beginning, I had to hoe the whole day for 40 cents an hour. I was able in the first year to set aside 850 dollars, while the hourly pay of my husband in construction was \$1.15. I would bring the little girl along with me: in the morning she was spick and span, in the evening she was a ball of mud. When she began to go to school things improved.*

In 1964, Nicolò made his first return back to Italy, hoping for a possibility for the return of the whole family, but there were no adequate opportunities. In 1970, it was even his wife's turn. The first visits as tourists to Capodistria did not stimulate a beautiful sensation: it was hard to face a reality which one did not belong to: there is a hospital on the old pieces of land once owned by the Mondo; Nicolò's old house was demolished and a new one was built. The new owner invited them to come in and offered them a glass of wine. He said that he had bought that house...

Everyday the thought goes back to the origins, every week there is the phonecall

to the brothers and sisters in Trieste, but by now their lives are beyond the ocean. They have three children - who speak more Istrian than Italian and are happily adjusted to the life overseas - and three perfectly Canadian grandchildren. These are good enough reasons to feel at home in Canada. Even if they can't help to take a trip to their birth place every two years.

ANTONIO AND SILVA PERINI THE MORGAN FAMILY

Thanks to the friendly organization and availability of Antonio Perini – President of the Istrian League of Chatham – and of his wife, it was possible to the author of this book, during her short stay, to visit Chatham and its surroundings, meeting a lot of people and listening to the memories of their past.

He was born in Capodistria in 1941. His life was set off in a completely different direction: it was a journey of unforeseen events and unexpected turns in life.

With his family – his parents, his brother Luigi and his sister Mariella – he lived at 18 San Elio Street. They had a good standard of living, thanks to his father's work – a fisherman – and to the produce of the fields of his maternal grandfather.

At the time he was very young; he has a foggy memory of the war, except for the escape towards the countryside during a bombardment. A wartime memory, however, sweetened even for him – just like for a few other interviewees – by an unusual image of German soldiers, used to giving out candy to children. Antonio's father, Mario, was doing compulsory service at the TOT (German Work Organization for youth).

During the postwar period, the rules that came in with the Tito regime made their weight felt quite soon: the catch of fish could no longer be taken to Trieste, but they were forced to sell it at a controlled price to nationalized companies. In addition they were forced to sign up with the party in power, in order to be able to buy fuel. Having stopped fishing, Perini's father went to work as an employee for the maritime line, which ran a connecting service with the hospitals of San Nicolò and Ancarano. A few years later, it was therefore a surprise to Antonio to see his father on his boat fishing again. Later on, he understood why: by simulating a fishing trip, Mario managed to reach Grado, planning later on to be joined by his family. Having moved to Trieste, he worked at the main fish market. He, however, didn't know about the problems his family's members had to put up with in Capodistria, created by the supporters of the new regime. Having been informed about what had happened, with a lot of fear he returned to Capodistria – on foot and in complete anonymity – where

he made an official request in order to be able to leave together with his family. He remained locked up in his house until permission was granted, which arrived about three weeks later. A sad story followed, with exasperatingly repetitive sequences: the truck, the trunks, the detachment from one's own land, the transit through Albaro Vescovà, baggage and furniture "temporarily" unloaded at the warehouses at the old port of Trieste. *Every now and then my parents would go down there to pull out of the trunks the bare essentials* – Antonio remembers.

Their first accommodation – unusual and very much appreciated – was for three months at the Vanoli Hotel, in Piazza Unità. The canteen was on Duca d'Aosta Street. A transfer followed to the camp in Opicina: mother and daughter were housed in a shack, Antonio with his father and brother in a big dormitory, shared with about eighty men, all speaking different languages and where brawls often broke out and swearing was common. In order to take them away from such an environment, the brothers were sent to the Villaggio del Fanciullo and the girl to a college at Cima Sappada.

A moment of tranquility seemed to have arrived with Mario's job at the Felszegi shipyards and his wife Rina's job in the kitchen of the refugee camp. Having finished their studies, even the children had found a job: Mariella in a rope factory, Luigi at the post office. Antonio, after a brief experience selling groceries in the camp, followed the example of his friend Mario Vascotto and decided to work on board the ships of a Norwegian company: *the greatest experience of my life* – he still highlights now. A man with a spirit always in ferment, his father however looked to the American dream. A plan that ended even before it began, because after the upheavals in Hungary in 1956, emigration towards the United States was closed. But Perini senior did not give up and he opted for Canada. It was 1959. News of his father's decision reached Antonio, while sailing in Australian waters. He had to obey his father, with an early repatriation, because he was under age, being under twenty one (the adult age was 21). On the 3rd May, 1960, with the whole family, Antonio had boarded again, but this time on the m/v Saturnia, which distanced him forever from the city of his youth: *Trieste, with his friends, the dives at Topolini (bathing establishment by the sea) and the excursions to Val Rosandra*. At the pier also his soccer team friends to bid him goodbye. His soccer shoes and uniform sailed with him. *I could not keep myself from crying. The only consolation was the thought of returning after a few years... 45 years have gone by.*

The trip, all things considered turned out to be pleasant: given that they were people of the sea, for the Perinis the crossing was not problematic. There was even an opportunity to forge friendships, which still last up until today and which can be found in these pages, like Marcella Puzzer Vesnaver and Emilia Trento Rota.

They arrived in Halifax on a grey and cold day, a stark contrast with the glowing image of lights and skyscrapers which Antonio had of America. He was impressed by the baggage inspection: *what do they want? they want us in Canada and then they check what we are bringing in this unfriendly manner ... We had a good appearance. Dad, my brother and I were wearing jackets, ties and white shirts. Even with new coats, which we bought before leaving, with my savings as a sailor. I had even bought a wedding ring for my dad, which he never had, and a watch.*

The train for the transfer, having improved a bit throughout the years, still consisted of hard wooden benches and it blackened the travellers with its puffs of charcoal smoke.



A visit to Palermo by Antonio Perini during a stopover of the m/v Saturnia. In the photo Antonio with her sister Mariella (in the centre) and Marcella Puzzer

The arrival in Chatham, after a brief stay in Toronto, was festive: the greeting of about a hundred fellow countrymen who had arrived during the previous years, promised well. With the welcoming party over however, the Perini found themselves alone, waiting for someone to inform them about their destination. The farmer for whom they would have had to work did not show up, remaining forever an unknown mystery. A field man from the sugar company, in charge of coordination – a really good person – took care of them accompanying them to their allocated house, with the well-known standard characteristics: dirty, old, crumbling, without window glass, without a bathroom. They did not speak the same language, but with open hands – an international gesture – the field man invited them to be patient. In the end he left them and they found themselves having to look after themselves as best they could. Practically out of the world, forgotten by everybody and by now hungry, Antonio and his father decided to go to town to buy at least a bit of basic necessities, to survive. They did not know the way, but they thought that by following the routes, they would reach some built-up area. They did not know that they would have had to travel 10 kilometres. Having finally been able to shop and resigned to covering 10 kilometres on foot in order to return, they were surprised by a big heavy shower which dissolved the paper containers of their supplies and their contents. Only four eggs survived. *Stupidly we went and stupidly we came back* – was the conclusion of Antonio's father Mario, referring to what had happened throughout the years.

With the support of a lot of Istrian friends met on the spot, they managed to find work and to move out of the house. Antonio's father was not really cut out to be a farmer and in the fields he caused more damage than anything else. Having paid off the debt of the ticket of the trip, they moved into the city. Disappointed with the adventure of which he had been the promoter, Mario from one day to the next packed his suitcase. Without knowing a word in English, he purchased a return ticket: Chatham-Toronto-New York-Trieste. It is not known how but due to a hitch, he boarded the m/v Cristoforo Colombo and landed in Genoa. For a few months his family members did not have any news about him, until they learnt about his arrival in Trieste from Luigi's fiancée, who had casually met him in the city. Antonio's father resumed his old job at the Felszegi company and found a house in Muggia. After a year and a half he was reunited with his wife, who arrived with Luigi: Antonio, like his sister, in the meantime having gotten married to an emigrant from Cittanova, chose to remain in Canada, where he had found some good prospective in order to settle down.

At first he worked in the construction industry: an onerous commitment, even 14-15 hours a day, but well-paid. He even participated in the construction of Highway

401, along which way the author obtained the following interview, while she was courteously being accompanied to Hamilton.

After a significant working episode in a paper mill, from simple worker he graduated to the position of supervisor, Antonio founded “Perini Contractors”, a construction and painting company.

In the meantime, at a wedding reception, there was the “fatal encounter” with Silvia Morgan – his wife since 1966 – who together with her family had crossed the Atlantic Ocean before him; they too were veterans from the experience of the exodus and of the refugee camps.

They were originally from Castelvenero, left in 1955 due to the widespread incompatibility with the postwar regime. Her father – who in his days had experienced the odyssey of the war and imprisonment – in order to be able to keep his job, had even been blackmailed into signing a petition in order to distance Father Bortolo,



The first trip of Antonio and Silva Perini to Niagara Falls in 1964

an Italian speaking priest, who was the object of various abuses on many occasions. There were 5 in the family: mother, father and three daughters. Laura, Silva and Oliva – born between 1942 and 1947 – lived with the family's constant recommendation not to talk about and to not express judgements outside of the house. The atmosphere was becoming evermore oppressive and their parents, after a conversation with her grandparents, who due to their age did not feel like leaving Istria, decided to leave for Trieste. Obtaining the exit visa required a lot of time and once obtained, they had permission to take away with them only their change of clothes and a few dishes. They reached the border with a carriage drawn by a horse. On the Italian side, a relative of theirs picked them up with a motorcycle with a sidecar. They were settled in Padriciano: her father began to work in the Faccanoni quarry, the girls attended the school opened up in the refugee camp. The decision to leave was born of the initial intention to emigrate to the USA where a cousin of her father lived. With the migratory contingents to the United States closed and conquered by the promotion conducted by the Canadian envoys, the alternative was Canada. Even because, on the map, Chicago – the city of the paternal cousin – seemed to be easily reachable.

On the 3rd May, 1957, they climbed aboard the m/v *Vulcania*: the adolescents were particularly proud of their elegant suits, skirt-blouse-raincoat and white shoes, purchased for the occasion. It was a beautiful sunny day. On the pier and on the crowd that came running to say goodbye, rained the streamers launched from the ship, while from the loudspeakers aboard blared the little song in fashion: “the little house in Canada”. It almost seemed like a departure for a pleasure cruise. Especially for the girls, it was a beautiful adventure: for the first time they had the opportunity to see Venice, Greece, Naples. The Morgan family even had the luck of travelling all five of them together, in a first class cabin.

The memory of the arrival in Canada – it was the 19th May, a Sunday – it is no different from the one of the others who were interviewed: grey Halifax, square and sticky bread, the uncomfortable train. In Chatham, at the welcoming lunch, the first impact with ketchup: initially disgusting, the Morgan sisters now admit that they cannot do without it. The small family was treated well right from the beginning, probably advantaged because of its surname, which sounded English. George Kerr, the owner of the farm which they were destined to, accommodated them into his old house: cold, but decorous. Even the farmer's wife was helpful, giving the girls an opportunity to attend a youth association, with many activities: from the perfecting of English to courses in home economics or square dancing. On Sundays all the families went together to town, to go to the church of their creed.

Despite the serenity of this life, the work in the fields should, however, not be forgotten; it began on their arrival: picking sugar beets and tomatoes. The Morgan father, an experienced farmer, was very demanding, but he was even able to transmit his skill. Even during school time, the girls – after classes and before doing their homework – had to help with the agricultural work. The school was a one room school – practically a single class, attended by 12 students – from kindergarten to grade eight. The teacher had an excellent method of teaching and achieved concrete results. Laura, after the compulsory school attendance age, left school in order to economically support the family. Employed in a baseball bat factory, in the Istrian community of Chatham she was the first girl to own a car, just as her family was the first to purchase a house and Silva, the first teacher after she graduated.

For Silva, her first return to Istria was with Antonio, on the occasion of their honeymoon. She had contrasting sentiments which she felt and continues to feel. She had become a stranger in the land which she however felt to belong to. This bond was so strong that she even brought some red Istrian earth to Canada which



Even during school time, the Morgan girls – after class and before doing their homework – had to give a hand with agricultural work

she scattered over her father's grave, in the cemetery of Chatham, so that he could be consoled of having been forced to live and die so far from his own land.

A sentiment of affection for the places of origin, which is shared with her husband, who is always active within the sphere of the Istrian association of Chatham. There, on the occasion of the big international gathering organized in 1989, the Istrian flag was raised for the first time on Canadian soil.

Their Istrian roots flourished in Ontario: their three children, inserted with success into the Canadian lifestyle, have not forgotten where their history began.



The Morgans next to their first car bought in Canada

MARIO AND MARCELLA VESNAVER

Mario was just an adolescent when with his parents, he left Isola, where he was born in May of 1940, the third of three children. He did not realize that he would leave Isola for good.

His life had begun on the eve of the war, which took his father far from home. Stationed in Cuneo, after the armistice of the 8th September, the man had returned to Istria on foot, moving at night in order not to run the risk of being deported by the Germans. An experience definitely in contrast to the childhood memory of Mario who received a snack every day from the Germans housed in the barracks close to his place of residence. The first years of the postwar period went by quite well: Mario attended Italian schools, while mum and dad worked at the Arrigoni factory. His father was a cooper. (In those days, a lot of fish products were generally preserved with salt in wooden barrels). With the treaty of 1954, things began to change every single day. There were a few less neighbours, a few friends were missing: all had left for Italy. Even Mario's sister and brother. The void left by those who were absent was replaced by a whole series of arrogance and spite by the pro-Tito supporters, many having arrived from far distant areas of Yugoslavia. After finishing school, even Mario had gone to work at the Arrigoni company – as a mechanic – but upon his family's request for authorization to leave the country, he had immediately been fired. With their household furnishings, they arrived in Trieste on the 25th November, 1955. *Tossed about from one refugee camp to the next, we would have had a right to an apartment due to my father's precarious health conditions* – the narrative of Mario overcome by the emotion of the memory of those days. During the period in Trieste, after a brief job interval at the Melillo Company, a bicycle shop, he went to the Karst Highway Company. In 1957, he got the job at Publigas and young Vesnaver thought that he had achieved the goal in life. A few years later, however, after having been to the Audace Pier a few times to say goodbye to friends who were leaving in order to go beyond the sea, he began to reflect upon the opportunities of Canada: *just for a few years in order to make a bit of money and then I'll come back*. Family members and friends, and above all his employer, all tried to dissuade him from taking that step. But Mario was unshakeable: at the beginning of the 1960s he left. In his suitcase there was a bit of clothes, undergarments and seven dollars... and a different travel ticket. With 111 guys – all single, the maximum age being thirty – a contract with a sugar company in his pocket, he crossed the Atlantic by air: Rome-Toronto, with stopovers in Lisbon and Montreal. An unexpected surprise, however, awaited the boys upon their arrival: the sugar factory had shut down. The organizers

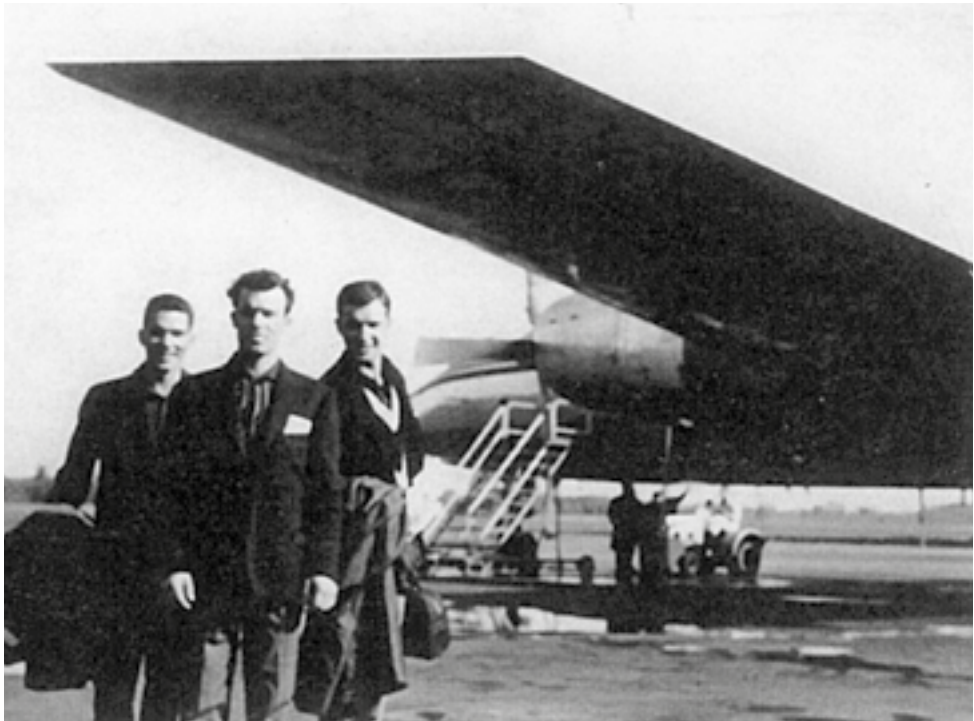
put them in buses and set them off for alternative jobs in agricultural areas. On the road to Chatham, at every stop, some would get off, picked up by some farmer. His trip ended in Woodstock, where he went to work in the tobacco fields for an immigrant, of Hungarian origin. The work was killing and when his cousin, with whom he had decided to team up, became sick in bed due to the hard work in the fields, the result was that both of them were fired. After vain attempts of finding work in the city of Toronto, they turned to the Italian Consulate in order to try to get a repatriation. Although this was impossible and having finished the few savings they had, Mario found a solution in Chatham, which he reached by train. Due to the employment crisis in progress, there were not a lot of opportunities, therefore he had to content himself with occasional jobs, often heavy and out in the cold. Having later



Mario Vesnaver in Trieste in 1957 with his working colleagues at Publigras

on entered into the workforce destined to build Highway 401 and then hired by the Chrysler factory in Windsor, his life began to take a better turn. The economy in the meantime was picking up and amongst the factories which opened up their doors in Chatham, there was even the Goodyear factory, where Mario ended up working for 25 years. A job which even gave him an opportunity to meet Marcella, his wife since 1962 and the sister of a colleague, with whom he shared a room at that time.

Even Marcella Puzzer is a refugee, from Monte di Capodistria, where she was born in 1941. A small girl during the wartime period, she was however traumatized by events which she had experienced firsthand: her house in flames after a bombardment, the escape on her brother's shoulders, temporary shelters – with floors made of pounded dirt and pungent mattresses stuffed with cornhusks. An ensemble of images which gave her nightmares right from her adolescence. Even the postwar period was not an easy skein to undo. She was the fourth of five children; the elder ones being all males. The family lived off the produce from the countryside, which her father looked after. When they opened up a radio factory in the town, Marcella thought that if she got a job there this would help to satisfy the family's economic needs and so she



At the beginning of the 1960s, with 111 boys – all single, maximum age being thirty – the contract in his pocket with the Canadian sugar company, Mario Vesvaner crossed the Atlantic by air

left school. Shortly after she was called by her bosses who offered her the opportunity to carry on with her studies, all the way to university. All she had to do was to sign a form. That proposal did not appear to be too clear and Marcella played for time in order to be able to understand. When she understood that the continuation of her education was conditioned by her adhesion to the party, as a young communist, she refused. *It was the beginning of the end* – Marcella still sighs today, who not only lost her job in the factory, but she saw herself excluded from every other possibility of employment. A bit for everybody, the atmosphere in the town was becoming evermore heavier and while everyday someone was escaping, the controls increased. Even Marcella decided to escape, but she only let her mother know about it. One afternoon, with a simulated casualness and under the investigative look of a police officer, she climbed onto the four o'clock bus for Trieste, hoping that she would be the only one hearing her heartbeat. It was 1958. Welcomed by an acquaintance of her mother, she began to work: from a babysitter to a jack of all trades. After a year, having found out that her brother Bruno – who had arrived at the Noghere camp, with his wife and daughter – had made a request to emigrate to Canada, Marcella found the idea so valid that she decided to join the small family nucleus. Only that she did it without telling her relatives.



Souvenir photograph on the wharf of the Sea Terminal before the departure (from Marcella Vesnaver's album)

She revealed her decision only when the approval for her departure was received. While she happily prepared the documents, someone asked her whether she knew about the cold which awaited her in Canada. Even ten degrees below zero – they explained to her. *But how cold is 10 degrees below zero?* – was her question.

The memory of her trip is a nice one: getting to meet Perini, stopovers in cities never seen before, the dolphins that followed the ship... Upon her arrival she was struck by the crowd at the port, waiting for the ship to arrive. Then there was that train, which never seemed to reach its destination.

Various were the job experiences: service provider, plantations, factory. After her marriage to Mario and the birth of the first son, she too worked in the fields with her little son next to her: her first pay cheques allowed her to buy a fridge. After her second child, in 1979 she signed up together with a neighbour of hers for a course as a real estate agent. Having brilliantly passed the final exam, she has been working in the sector for over 20 years.

After 45 years in Canada, Marcella by now even feels that she belongs to that land: *two children, six grandchildren, we have built our lives here, together* – she concludes smiling at her husband. Mario nods, but he lets a doubt transpire: *I was young when I left Trieste, I saw the world differently... however it is useless to hypothesize...*

PAOLO MARTINI

Besides a life robbed of a normal childhood, he recounts past events about the existing discomfort, generally put up by an entire generation born during the postwar geopolitical mutations.

In 1945, his father had left Istria for Trieste. It was the city of his wife and there, two years later, Paolo was born, who at the early age of eight months lost his mother. He was a child who was forced to grow up in a hurry, as his brother and sister did as well. He was raised by the family of his father who, having remained a widower, returned to Sicciole, resuming his job in the salt works. In order to be able to keep his job, the new system forced him to learn Slovenian, but at home Italian had always been spoken. The family was numerous, with the grandmother, the uncles and aunts and the various little cousins, whom the war had made orphans.

As had happened to many Italian children, the obligation to learn the new language generated a whole series of difficulties even for Paolo, who at school was

even derided by the teachers. It was the reason for different failures, until coming to her aid there was the encounter with Giuliana Vuk, a girl who was a few years younger, who up until the age of 7 had only spoke Slovenian. Now she is his wife.

The years of Sicciole are not infant's memories – says Paolo: *I could write a novel about my story. Ever since I can remember, I have always worked...* His father could not withstand the trials of life and for a while he found comfort in alcohol. He practically became an invalid, with problems to his sight and difficulties walking. Supporting him was his son right from the age of 8: both during the summer in the work at the salt works, and during the winter in accompanying him to his job as a night time security guard on construction sites. Until his father passed away. Paolo was 14 years old. An uncle of his wanted to take care of him, but there was an intervention – at least strange, in order to use a euphemism – on the part of the public institutions. He was, in fact, handed over to a young employee – about 28 years old – who wanted to take him to her place, at Pirano. More than a guardian, she had other reasons with regard to the boy. His uncle – and this time he was listened to – intervened. Returning to the family, the young man found a job at Portorose, as an apprentice florist.

His life however was entering into another chapter: his brother had died in an accident and his sister – who emigrated to Canada after having got married – solicited him to meet up with her. Paolo accepted the invitation and in 1964 flew towards his new homeland: Zagreb – Rome – Montreal – Toronto, was the route. Welcoming him was his sister and his brother-in-law. – *From Toronto to Chatham, I did not see a light: the banks of the road were covered with snow, three metres high. But where had I arrived, where were they taking me?* – was his doubt.

After a few months, he found work in Windsor, a city which the Detroit River separated from the United States. He began as a labourer, he continued as a carpenter. At a distance of 40 years, he is now the director of the same company. It was a Friulian company, where one had to work with commitment: even from 5 o'clock in the morning to 8 o'clock in the evening. This was a different schedule from the standard 8 hours per day, as a public employee, which he had in Istria, where he made his first return the Christmas of 1965. It was then that he saw Giuliana once again. Before returning to Canada to arrange their wedding plans, he found himself to be the protagonist of an unexpected adventure, against his will: at the moment of returning to Italy in fact, he had to face the Yugoslavian authorities, which did not allow him to leave the territory, given that he had not performed compulsory military service. Amongst the various contacts, he even bumped into his “ex guardian with other reasons”. After numerous attempts to cross the border, which turned out to be

fruitless, he bribed a border guard, putting 50 dollars among the pages of his old expired pass, which was kept during those years by his caring uncle. The customs officer went away “in order to check something” in the offices and Paolo managed to make his way to the Italian area.

He found himself experiencing a similar event in 1980, when he went back to his native land with Giuliana – who upon reaching adult age caught up with him and married him in Canada – and with their three children. With ease and the experience already obtained by now, he managed to overcome every obstacle.

Paolo and Giuliana practically grew up together: the years of living together as a couple in Chatham are much more than the years growing up as children in Istria. And yet their strong attachment to their land of origin has not been erased, which they go back to more or less every other year. Even their children share this feeling. The older ones speak Italian better than the younger one, who understands it, but feels more Canadian.

ALBINO AND GIULIANA BASIACO

The thought directed to his native land by Albino Basiaco, born in 1938 *at Loseri Villa Gardossi, close to Ponte Porton* – as he specifies, is a memory wrapped up in the sweetness of the climate and beauty of the Adriatic Sea. *I would have never thought of going to another country, even less to another continent.*

Of his childhood years, he even has the most distant years quite vivid in his mind. There were seven children, of whom 3 were males, in the family. The house was big; from its windows the Quieto Valley could be seen. He would play in the fields, together with other children. His father was a farmer. On a piece of land of his, the German soldiers had encamped during the war and his mother had to cook for them. The children however were not scared of them, on the contrary: *we would go into the henhouses to steal a few eggs in order to take them to the soldiers, so that they would give us some candy in exchange* – he smiles. He too, as has been heard from other people who were interviewed, remembers a German soldier who, holding a couple of girls in his arms, cried: he was thinking of his children at home, whom he probably would never see again.

The war ended and Albino began to go to school. The primary one of his town, was small: two rooms for thirty students. Croatian had become the teaching language. He would have then finished his 4th and 5th year of secondary school at Buie.

Having moved with the family to Dalia, he met Giuliana Labinian at a dance,

who in 1960 became his wife. She too arrived on the coast in the postwar period, from Cottili, a small town close to San Bortolo di Montona, where she was born in 1940, into a numerous family: her grandmother, a very good cook, her parents, who worked in the fields, 6 children, of whom only one was male. She has very beautiful memories of the native home. Unfortunately, it no longer exists. Having started school in Italian, at a certain point she found herself having to learn Croatian. At the age of 16 she went to work in a sweater factory at Cittanova. Having started a family, Albino and Giuliana at first never thought of having to leave their own land. He was working – just like his father – on a big farm. From driving the tractors, due to his vast experience in the wine producing field, he was promoted to be a cellar man, in substitution of his predecessor who had fled to Italy. After three months in the job however, he was pressurised by the leaders in power to join the Communist Party. His refusal, together with the baptism of his two daughters who were born in the meantime, meant his firing from the job.

Without his family members finding out, they decided that it was time to leave. Giuliana together with her mother-in-law and the small girls – one 3 and the other 18 months old – reached Trieste by bus, as if they were going on a regular visit of a few days to relatives. When at night Albino's mother – unaware of everything – saw her son arrive, understood that she would have to return to Istria all alone and she let herself go into a desperate crying. It was the 17th April, 1963. On the following day, they handed in their documents to the police headquarters and asked for political asylum, the family headed towards the refugee camp of Padriciano. Exactly a year later they left it in order to move into an apartment on Molino a Vapore Street, a side street of Madonnina Street, where the Basiaco family stayed until the 25th October, 1966, the date of their departure for Canada. They chose to emigrate because the activity of the port, where Albino had gone to work, was dropping due to the competition from over the border. His sisters, already overseas, called him to join them. They left Trieste aboard the m/v Cristoforo Colombo. It was a very beautiful trip: from Venice, passing through Greece, Naples, Messina, Malaga, Lisbon and finally, on Sunday the 8th November, they arrived in Halifax. A green trunk and three suitcases, their baggage, with varied contents: from clothes to personal effects, from linen for the house to pots and pans, from porcelain plates to new cutlery, which was stolen upon arrival. Amongst the porcelain, they even managed to hide a *prosciutto crudo* (cured ham) from Istria.

Climbing aboard the train for their transfer to their place of destination, they did not realize that they had been privileged: the old steam locomotive, a great torment of the previous pages, had become a convoy fuelled by diesel, the old wooden benches had been substituted with antiquated, but decent, seats.

After a year and a half in the north – with a sister of his who had made him come to Canada – and of work in a furniture factory, Albino chose to move to Chatham, where the climate is meeker and where his other sisters and brother lived. With his brother he worked as a bricklayer for many years, in order to then move to a factory of spare parts for cars. Undoubtedly his and Giuliana's experience turned out to be beneficial, because they were no longer pioneers, but found the support and the experience of those who had arrived before.

Of their existence in the new world – an expression which had struck Albino a lot upon his departure from Italy – they end up making an overall positive conclusion.

The attachment to and the nostalgia for Istria continue, but Canada has given them and, above all, their daughters a future.

The regret is for the very numerous family – scattered a bit all over the world – which rarely has the possibility of getting all together.



A clipping from a Canadian newspaper, which reports the news of the arrival in Chatham of the Istrian refugees, sent by Mario Brezzi to his relatives in Italy

A half a century *from dawn to dusk*

Back then practically a sorting centre for pioneers, Chatham, today, presents itself as a happy little town of the Canadian province, in which the tranquility combines itself with the working and socio-cultural commitment of its inhabitants. Of a healthy and wise human dimension, an atmosphere can be breathed which brings back to the mind the most pleasant aspects of the extra-metropolitan setting of many American films: orderly traffic, wide and well looked-after roads, flanked by grassy little strips on which stand gracious single family homes surrounded by gardens.

The sugar factory – many times mentioned in the narratives of the previous pages as the aspired to professional goal of a time – no longer exists: it was closed down many years ago, together with two tomato canning factories. Agriculture continues instead to confirm itself as the mainstay of the economy. Now it is, however, almost entirely supported by technology. Changed are even the figures of the labourers, now mainly coming from Jamaica and Mexico, safeguarded by the trade unions in all contractual phases: from logistical accommodations to working hours.

Part of the conspicuous cereal harvest, used in the local bio-refinery for the production of ethanol – the ecological fuel, regularly sold in the city's service stations



Service station in Chatham, supplying the ecological fuel, ethanol, obtained from cereal

– also contributes towards revolutionizing even more the physical appearance of the agricultural sector. As Canadian winter is very cold and long, the progress is witnessed by prominent greenhouses - a kind of glass citadel - where the cultivation of flowers and vegetables covers a vast area between Chatham and Windsor. Windsor is a lively city, linked by a bridge to Detroit, its opposite on the other side of the river by the same name – which surprisingly makes the Italian visitor find Udine Square and the fountain donated in 1982 by the Friulian province, with which it has been twinned for over thirty years.

Sites of historical interest are not lacking in Chatham and its surrounding areas, such as the Indian reserve of Walpole Island in the region called Bkejwanong (which means “where the waters divide”).

The cradle of the origins of the indigenous people – presently the only one having the right to reside there – the territory is, amongst other things, the headquarters of the Heritage Centre, founded in 1989: one of the first associations of native communities in Canada to take up the leading role in the field of environmental protection, combined with sustainable development and the preservation of ancient traditions.

This area is remembered for the so-called shack of Uncle Tom, in memory of the popular novel with the same name written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Of inspiration to the author was the autobiography written by the Reverend Josiah Henson, a Black slave who, having found freedom in Canada, where he had escaped to together with his wife and children, strove to help other companions of misadventure like his. He did it through the *underground railroad*, an organization of American anti-slavery families, who through various agreed upon signals – like for example lit up candles at the windows – indicated to the fugitives where they could count upon a sure refuge on their journey towards liberation from slavery, practically towards the Canadian shores of Lake St. Clair.

From Chatham to Hamilton

The Canadian collage of Julian-Dalmatian memories grows bigger with the interviews carried out thanks to the dynamic cooperation of Isabella Alberghetti – President of the Julian Dalmatian Association of Families of Hamilton and surroundings – ever amiably ready to host the author of this book, during the fleeting stopover in her city. Hamilton, the most important Canadian steel producing centre – not too far from the famous Niagara Falls – is characterized by a conspicuous presence of industries, which, however, manages to blend with the dwellings of a pleasant urban town. The appearance of the residential area – of an Anglo-Saxon style – presents itself, in fact, with the characteristics of a fine locality of the American or Australian province, with excellent urban and extra-urban connections.

ISABELLA PICCO widow ALBERGHETTI

From the Lombard-Friulian DNA, she has been the witness of the changes undergone by that corner of the world, which responds to the name of Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Born in 1927 at Montechiaro, in the Province of Brescia, of a Friulian father and a Brescian mother, right from her childhood she had lived in Tolmino, where her father had chosen to return to – after a first experience there in the 1920s – in order to reopen a photographic studio. She had three brothers and sisters, her mother was in knitwear and fabrics business. A well-off and serene family, in short. Isabella even conserves the memory of that period of an excellent relationship between Italian and Slovenian students. *There were friends and acquaintances, who had kept their Slovenian surnames freely; and even, I myself, during my attendance of classes in primary school, between 1939 and 1943, signed up for a Slovenian course* – was her narrative. Smiling she recalls how Tolmino was a border town with about 3,000 inhabitants, where at the outbreak of the conflict about 30,000 soldiers had been sent to it. *There were perhaps about fifty of us girls. It so happened that at the age of 13 I had a marriage proposal, to which my father answered holding the rifle, which was in his possession, as he belonged to the anti-aircraft artillery.*

Up until 1943, tranquillity and disorder lived together alternating in the town. A circle of events followed, involving the young Picco girl since the 8th September:

while she was on the phone with her boy-friend - who later became her husband – the call was interrupted by the telephone operator, who announced the end of the war. The moments of uncertainty, at first plugged up by the reassurances of the law and order forces present on the ground, exploded dramatically overwhelming in the confusion of the following day: the empty barracks, a lot of people who were leaving town. She and her father, on their bicycles, left in order to go on a reconnaissance round, heading towards the area of San Daniele, her father's place of origin. They managed to get by, thanks even to the careless attitude of her sixteen years of age, getting by a lot of close encounters with partisans who didn't appreciate the Italian flag, which she had on her bicycle. *On the route to Udine we were the witnesses of the total collapse of our army: we ran into a lot of Italian soldiers who were throwing away their guns and uniforms, as long as not to be captured by the Germans, already operating at Cividale. ...Managing to dodge a lot of dangers, we arrived in San Daniele. We stopped there, where we were reached shortly after by my mother and one of my brothers. Of the other two, one had been shot down in flight, while we were able to re-embrace the other one, a Bersagliere, just when he arrived with the fifth army. I would have never imagined that for over twenty-five years I would never have seen Tolmino again. We were the first exiles, even if nobody wants to recognize it* – was her memory of those days.

The postwar period seemed to bring back tranquility. Isabella's father moved to Pordenone – the native city of his son-in-law – his family and photographic business. *We had a comfortable lifestyle* – Isabella highlights. Meanwhile she got married



Carefree adolescence in Tolmino of Isabella Alberghetti, with her brothers, sisters and friends

and gave birth to her first child, a girl; her husband had an important position in the Cotonificio Veneziano (cotton mill). But we were lured by the proposals of the IRO (International Refugee Organization – the Agency which gave refugees the possibility to emigrate under the patronage of the United Nations). *It would have seemed to be a blunder to turn down the opportunity to reach America free of charge. The American dream had even infected my brother; having left a bit earlier than us for Canada: a university student, he found himself working in the mines of northern Quebec* – the bitter consideration.

Towards the end of 1951, even the Alberghetti family responded to the call of Canada, via Gorizia – Bremenhaven, the German port where the IRO had set up a camp for refugees, awaiting to embark for the Americas and Australia. They had the experience of sharing a room with another family, just separated by a curtain; the camp guarded by a guard. *It was not possible to go back. We had sold everything.* Having remained alone with her girl, because the men had been made to leave a month before, Isabella was able to embark on the ship Anna Salen – a 14 tonne liberty ship – thanks to the help of her brother from Canada. The trip made her so sick as to take away every strength from her and to force her, upon her arrival in Halifax, to actually spend three days in a hospital. She had good medical attention both for herself and for her daughter who was just three years old. Of the period in hospital, she remembers her surprise at the use of taking the temperature by sticking a thermometer in the mouth, something that was not done in our country.

Having reached her husband after much difficulty, they were settled in a sorting camp, immediately outside Toronto: in a shack, however with a small room that was entirely for the three of them and with an abundant refectory service. The saga continued with the move to the town where her brother lived: she was shocked to see so much snow, even in April. Her husband followed his brother-in-law to work in the mines and Isabella, after having been a domestic helper, with the help of dictionaries and paper patterns, she became a seamstress.

In the five years following the landing in Canada, the continuation of events was decidedly vivid: with the family's re-grouping upon the arrival of the other Picco family members, Montreal gave them the opportunity to improve their projects. A photographic studio was set up by the brothers – with a branch even in Niagara Falls – and Isabella for a short while opened up a fashion store with products imported from Italy. The business was destined, however, to go up literally in smoke, because of a fire; unfortunately also not sufficiently covered by insurance. She went back to her work as a seamstress, while her husband was hired by General Motors.

After having 4 children and having found a quiet life-style, in 1965, Mr. Alber-

ghetti had the first of a series of heart attacks. He thought that if he had to die, he wanted it to happen on his native soil. They crossed the Atlantic Ocean once again. Isabella immediately found work at the Lido of Venice, as a fashion expert. After a few years, she realized that her professional commitment was absorbing too much of her time at the expense of her family life: the immediate determination to return to Canada followed. Having resumed her work in the clothing sector, step after step she became responsible for a chain of stores.

Having become a widow and having retired from work, Isabella Alberghetti now is a grandmother of nine grandchildren. Despite the affection which binds her to her native town (proof of it is the conspicuous part of the savings, absorbed throughout the years by the trips to Italy), after 50 years she feels that she belongs to Canada, where she finds a sense of order more in sync with her way of thinking: *from climbing onto a steamer to getting off a train, from the respect for queue to the cordial relationship with the post office staff.*

Of a particular emotion was her first return to Tolmino in 1969 and subsequent homecoming, meeting her former classmates, who still live there and wait for her with immutable friendship. *A reciprocal affection with the people of the place, which finds confirmation in the care of the grave of my brother, where a friendly hand – even if unknown – continues to bring flowers.*

ARNALDO MINERVA

I lived in Val Scurigne, in a small house of Cento Celle – a group of homes built at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – purchased at the time by my grandmother. My brother Renzo was a few years younger than me. The memory of Minerva goes way back to his childhood years in Fiume, where he was born in 1936; on 26 Bolzano Street – as he specifies.

The memory, however, is burning like a wound which has never healed and Arnaldo cannot manage to put a brake on the emotion, when he thinks back to the brutality when he was deprived of his father, at the end of the war. It was 1945; the day in which Tito's troops entered into Fiume. Not having seen his father return home from work, he accompanied his mother to the police headquarters, where his father was an employee. They found out that he had been arrested together with other colleagues of the same rank. For a week, he and his mother were able to visit him everyday, taking some food to him. All of a sudden they were told not to return again, because he had been moved to another place of detention, not well-specified.

At length and in vain they tried to get news of him. After two and a half years of uninterrupted wandering around in search of him, a government official in charge brutally informed them that his father had already been shot eight days after his arrest, annoyingly concluding that nothing hindered them from leaving for Italy. Arnaldo still relives now the excruciating reaction of his mother and her provocative challenge to kill her too, which she told the officer and the police who were called to intervene in order to make her go away. Until then the boy had regularly attended school, even by following the teaching of the new language imposed by the Yugo-



Arnaldo Minerva upon his arrival in Bari, together with his mother and brother: they are wearing their coats in which their possessions had been hidden during their escape to Italy

slav regime. The day after the dramatic confrontation, he refused to take part in the lessons and reacted against the teacher, heading towards him in order to punish him. He threw the inkpot at her: it shattered on the blackboard into a thousand pieces. He fled from the classroom window, on the second floor.

Because of this incident, his mother felt that they had to move to Italy. They filled two railway carriages with their trunks and furnishings, which they were allowed to take with them. With the prohibition in force, however, of taking away any valuable object or liquid cash, during the days before the departure his mother got down to making some clothes, in which she hid jewellery and money between the seams of linings, belts and collars. She even got down to baking some “special” buns, which turned out to be excellent hiding spots for her small treasure. Having got through the body inspection, reserved for women at the border, his mother offered the militia a bun; of course not the ones with “a surprise inside”. In any case it was not accepted.

The furniture was destined to the big warehouses in Livorno, which were opened to store the household furnishings of the refugees upon their arrival. The Minerva family instead, after a brief stay at the silos of Trieste, reached Bari. The first accommodations were in an old convent of the old city. *In Fiume I slept on feathers; there I found myself with some planks and two blankets as a bed* – was his observation. Things improved with their transfer to Fesca, where they remained for a few years in a seaside summer camp, turned into a refugee camp: they were given a room on the second floor, in a building which faced the sea. During that stay, his mother met the man whom later she remarried, he too a refugee from Fiume.

Having gone to Turin where she had some contacts, in order to verify some possible employment opportunities, the lady managed to obtain a job offer at FIAT for her eldest son and for her future husband: one as a carpenter, the other in the spray painting sector. Something unexpected awaited her upon her return to Puglia, where in the meantime the IRO functionaries had advertised the benefits of migrating to Canada: her companion had adhered to the initiative, even on behalf of the family nucleus into which he was about to enter. Goodbye Torino, goodbye FIAT, goodbye beautiful furniture in Livorno!

Amongst the various bureaucratic things to take care of before the departure, there was the move to the waiting camp of Pozzuoli, followed by his mother’s wedding, because Canada wanted complete family nuclei. The first one to leave was the stepfather, who in a certain sense went there to check the situation. The children with their mother were instead transferred to Germany, where they stayed for three months, until they embarked on the ship “Anna Salen”. In their trunks were their personal effects, their household items, a sewing machine (the maternal side was a dynasty

of tailors) and some carpentry tools, which their grandfather had used as a hobby.

As soon as the English Channel was crossed, they had to make a U-turn and circumnavigate England, due to a cyclone that raged over the ocean. Unfortunately the cyclone changed direction and hit them while they headed north. The crossing lasted twelve days instead of six. *The last day of sailing was the only one that had clear skies* – Arnaldo recalls. They knew very little about Canada, except for a few documents seen at Pozzuoli. It was 1951.

Arriving in Halifax, before climbing onto the by now well-known train, they were advised to purchase a small supply of food, considering the three day ride on the rails which was awaiting them. *Besides what seemed to look like bread, but for us was not bread, not knowing the language, we only purchased food packaged in jars, to be able to recognize its contents.* Having however opened up a jar of cucumbers, upon tasting them they thought they had bought an expired product. It wasn't so: according to the gastronomic habits of the new country, instead of being pickled the cucumbers had been marinated in sugar.

Having reached northern Quebec, about 600 miles from Toronto, they were reunited with their stepfather, convalescing however from a serious accident in the goldmines where he worked. The new life began marked by extreme poverty: *we had to shop on credit, we did not even have 15 cents for a stamp in order to write back to Italy and to ask them to send us a bit of money, the jewellery brought by mother were useless since she couldn't sell them, because the town was only inhabited by poor miners.*

Arnaldo decided to help the family: taking advantage of his tall height for a 14-year-old boy, he lied about his age and declared to be 17, so he could be hired in the mine. His absence from school caused the police to visit his family, who didn't know that the son was missing school. Though not agreeing with his decision, his parents accepted his choice.

In 1953, they moved to Niagara Falls: they arrived in May, at the full reawakening of nature. The trees which flanked the Queen Elizabeth Way, inaugurated a few years before, were a multicoloured explosion of sprouts and corollas. A veteran from the long period of darkness, in which he had almost forgotten that flowers existed, Arnaldo felt as if he had reached paradise.

They began to work for a company which looked after the construction of the hydroelectric power station. The work was even heavier and more dangerous than the one in the mines, but the mild climate and the positive future prospects convinced them to stay. It was a right choice: within ten years, Minerva became the owner of a successful construction company, while his brother went to work in his stepfather's

painting company. He considered himself to be lucky due to the entrepreneurial level reached which, besides a satisfying way of life, allowed him to have pleasant vacations, aboard his airplane or his boat.

Married since 1958 to a girl from Treviso, he is the father of three children and a grandfather of four grandchildren.

He has an absolutely clear memory of Fiume: it is proven by the carefree ways with which he knew how to move himself through its streets, during his only visit there, which coincided with the outbreak of the last conflict in the former Yugoslavia.

DINO ROCCO

10 years of childhood before the outbreak of the war: *and it was a rather nice childhood* – confirms Dino Rocco, born at Dignano in 1930. There were 5 members in the family – the parents and three children, of which two were males – and they could count upon a discreet wellbeing. His father, besides the fields which he took care of as a hobby, was the owner of an emporium, which sold a bit of everything. Amongst other things, he supplied foodstuffs to the Italian army stationed in Pola. *We lived close to the sea, we would go fishing, Fasana was a few kilometres away from us... After the 8th September, events dramatically changed within the span of a day: having gone out with the lira received from my dad, in order to buy him cigarettes, I still have in front of my eyes the poster which I found pasted on the wall, with the communiqué signed by Badoglio. The policemen had disappeared from the scene, just like the Custom Officers. We, who had remained, were in God's hands.* Though in its tragic emergency, he smiles remembering that suddenly the hall town smelt of grappa, emanating from the clandestine distilleries, because of the absence of control by the Custom Officers.

Much more is suffered upon the recollection of the arrest – on the part of Tito's partisans – of his elder brother, then seventeen years old, and of the dozen of friends with whom he was together on the beach. Conscripted into Tito's ranks, only four survived that experience. Amongst them, his brother Dino, reached by his family members in Fiume in 1945, at the end of the war. *We found him hungry, dressed up in a combination of leftovers from various uniforms: he looked like a beggar.* He escaped from Fiume in order to go back to his town, when the British arrived in Pola, but hunted down by the OZNA – the secret police – he had to continue fleeing and hiding himself, until the moment in which together with his sister and brother he managed to embark on the s/s Toscana. The ship was the symbol of the great

Italian exodus from Pola. It was the 19th March, 1947: the last voyage of the ship towards Venice. His father, condemned to forced labour by the new regime, had to spend six months in prison. His mother stayed behind to wait for him. The family rejoined only three years later, in 1950.

From Venice, the boys were transferred to an assistance centre for refugees in Perugia. Trying to give their future a better hope, as they were still young, the two males decided to check out the area of Torino, to look for better prospects. Absolutely broke, they covered the trip in five days, travelling as clandestines on various tracts of the railway, in such a way as to avoid running into the ticket inspector. In order to feed themselves, they would turn to the various canteens for refugees along the way. Once having arrived at their set destination, they found it was impossible to be accepted in the refugee camp in Torino, called Casermette San Paolo. Some of the friends, who helped them to hide in the camp, advised Dino to go to Rome to obtain a legal registration in that district. His travel ticket came from a donation from the friends in the camp. He reached the capital and after having contacted several people, he succeeded in meeting the General in charge of all the refugee camps in Italy. Unforgettable was the reaction of that General, who after having put everybody at attention, turned to him and to the small group of fellow townsmen who had accompanied him: You Istrians are harder than stones. They got out of there with the authorization for the camp in Torino, which then housed about 3,000 Italian refugees, not only coming from Istria, Fiume and Dalmatia, but even from other countries like Greece and Albania. *The accommodations were in shacks of a military kind: men on one side, women on the other; the camp beds consisted of two wooden trestles upon which to put the straw mattress.*

Having met Ezio Loik from Fiume – famous soccer player of the Grande Torino who, through personal contacts at the FIAT factory, did a lot to find accommodations for his fellow exiled townspeople – Dino Rocco was hired at Mirafiori, with a monthly salary of 35,000 Italian liras. *It was a lot of money, but I didn't know it; I only noticed it later, when I arrived in Canada and earned much less* – the bitter regret.

Young, having a passion for reading and adventure, he allowed himself to be influenced by the prospects forwarded by the IRO. After a first hypothesis of emigrating to Australia – put aside because of his mother's tears, who found that continent to be too far away – he directed his plans towards the charming attraction of the United States. A native of Pola, casually seen again in Milan during the clearing up of the bureaucratic formalities, pointed out to him the risk of being recruited by the States for the Korean War then in progress. Dino Rocco accepted the alternative suggestion of Canada.

Pozzuoli and Bremenhaven were the immediate successive stopovers. There were three weeks of waiting in the German camp for the embarkation. *They made us put on the overalls upon which stood out the POW (Prisoner Of War) abbreviation.* Before the departure for Canada, he sent to his mother the money left: the trip was covered by the IRO. In his suitcase, a miscellaneous of personal effects and hopes.

Once in Halifax, just like a parcel to be delivered, they put around his neck the card with his destination: Yorktown, in Saskatchewan, where he arrived after five days by train. Amongst understandable difficulties, lacking a knowledge of the language, after a further bus ride, they helped him to reach the farm which he had been destined to. The owner was a Ukrainian who was a naturalized Canadian, who welcomed him in a familiar way. The work – from looking after the horses to harvesting wheat – began at 5 o'clock in the morning and went on until quite late into



The cards – marked with the locality of destination – which were hung around the neck of the immigrants at the moment on climbing aboard the train (material of the Vodopia family)

the evening, but he was supported by adequate equipment. Every now and then the farmer would accompany him to town to dance.

Having finished the summer harvesting work, Rocco accepted a job to join a team of lumberjacks in the forest: *we built a hut for ourselves, another one for the horses, we dug into the ground in order to pull out water – it was 40 degrees below zero. Moreover it was only possible to work in the forest during winter, because during the summer there are the insects which attack and devour you.* He often missed his stay in Torino: *I was a dandy there, with my black suit, white shirt, yellow tie... Later on, many of my companions of adventure went back, but I was too proud to do so. I had left everything: family, work, friends, Italy...*

Instinctive in his choices, from the woods he moved to Toronto, because amongst the travellers, who were buying their ticket at the railway station, he heard the word *toro*, which reminded him of Torino. In the new place too, many were the jobs which followed each other throughout the years, uncommonly chosen due to the casualness of the circumstances: from dishwasher to first-class cook, from working in the tobacco fields to a painter. Until he found himself in a car manufacturing plant again: this time it was at Ford, where he worked up until 1985, when he retired.

He moved to Hamilton after his wedding in 1964 to a girl from the area, but of Calabrian origin, who gave him a daughter.

He has returned to Italy on several occasions, meeting up with his brother and sister. His parents, however, passed away before his return.

He never again returned to Dignano. He goes back there with his memory: he sees faces, streets, olive groves, grapes, figs, the sea, fish. *I relive all of its fragrance: I cannot forget my town.*

TEODORO ODONI

We lived in the roadman's house of Gracischie, Municipality of Villa Decani. It was the province of Pola, which is 100 kilometres away, while it is 29 kilometres from piazza Unità in Trieste – begins his narrative, while from the bow window of the Odoni home's living room, those listening are busy admiring the panoramic view of Hamilton at the feet of the hill.

In the little town where he was born in 1930, his father was the owner of an emporium, which grew bit by bit due to its strategic position, and which attracted a wide range of customers. Teodoro was the oldest of four brothers. The memory that takes him back to the years of his infancy is a pleasant one: elementary school

at Covedo with a teacher from Trieste, Anita Musetti; a tranquil atmosphere in the town, cordial relations between the inhabitants. There was a discreet wellbeing in the family. They even had a car, something rare in those days: *a taxi from Trieste, green and black in colour, I can still see it in front of my eyes* – he specifies.

With the outbreak of the war, at the moment of the armistice in 1943 he was attending the 4th and 5th year of secondary school in Italy at the seminary of Capodistria. He had to return home in order to help out his mother with work, because his father had to hide himself due to the alternating round ups by opposite formations: nazi-fascists during the day, partisans at night. They did not manage to save their house, burnt on the 2nd October, 1943 during the course of a German reprisal, in response to the destruction of the bridge over the Risano by the partisans. Having lost everything, but not the credit with the suppliers in Trieste, his father started his business once again. The emergency accommodation was above the old stable. Exhausted by the toils which she had to subject herself to, mother Odoni died in 1945.

It was not easy to face the big changes in the postwar period: *it was not possible to speak Italian. Our surname was changed to Udovic. It was better to limit one's own expressions, so as to even avoid extreme consequences. All of a sudden one August day in 1946, while we were working in our store, four men who got out of a black car entered: from that moment the company no longer belonged to us, but was being absorbed by the government cooperative. Dad and I had become its employees.*

After various problems, Teodoro was moved to Sesana, into the old “Wanda’s bakery”, turned into a social cooperative. Summoned for four years military service in the navy, he decided to flee to Trieste, by pretending to visit his relatives in Capodistria, before doing his military service. *From there it would have been able to reach Trieste, between the two Scoffie, big Scoffia and small Scoffia* – was his plan. During the escape his heart stopped when the border militia, having sensed his steps, ordered him to stop which was followed by a burst of machinegun fire. *I ran like a hare in order to cross the border; I then found accommodation with a family. I later discovered they knew my father, Giovanni Odoni, who was practically well-known all over Istria.*

Having asked for political asylum, he was authorized to stay with a group of his fellow townspeople, who had taken refuge in Trieste on Via Padovan 4, an old building where horses were kept. The accommodation was in the hayloft and meals had to be consumed in the canteen on via Gambini.

After a first job as a cleaner in a warehouse, he was welcomed by Mr. Kunze, a wholesaler in stationery material on via Cavana and thus he worked as an errand boy. With the closure of the company due to the owner’s illness, Odoni went to work as

a waiter: from the Gelsomini's Restaurant on via Rossetti to the Mecchia, a small restaurant in the port area, where a Russian band played, which the Americans, who were then stationed in Trieste with the Allied Military Government, enjoyed tremendously. When the Russians emigrated, the place deteriorated badly.

Teodoro found himself moving from job to job: *paid under the table*, he specifies smilingly. It was 1950. He became a waiter at the Bar Catina in piazza Perugino. *I was doing very well there. I worked until two, three o'clock in the morning. After work, we waiters from various places in Trieste used to get together, in cheerful company, in the area of the railway station. We would burn the midnight oil by having a riotous time before going to bed. We would start work again at four o'clock in the afternoon.*

By chance his life began to change during a ride on his Vespa with a friend. Struck by the good looks of two girls, they followed them and found themselves at the Emigration Office: they were two Polish refugees who were obtaining information on how to reach Canada. Even Teodoro made a request in order to emigrate and was admitted. At the same time of his departure, he found himself in a dilemma, because his application to join the traffic police had also been accepted. Advised to leave by Peter, an old friend of his from the Bar Catina, he entrusted his future to the toss of a 5 Italian lira coin. Heads came out, so in 1951, via Bremenhaven, he headed towards Canada with the s/s Nelly, a merchant ship fitted for the transportation of



Odoni accepted to enter into a team of lumberjacks: six months in the woods, with over two metres of snow

emigrants. He seemed to have the situation under control (proof of it was that as soon as he had boarded it he immediately volunteered to work as a waiter on board), but at the moment of the detachment from the quay, his heart melted at the notes of the song *Auf Wiedersehen*, blaring out from the loudspeakers aboard. And he wept.

It was the 15th December when he landed in Halifax and it was terribly cold. *In the propaganda photographs that they had shown us in Italy, one could see Niagara Falls, little fairytale villas, all workers going to work in a Cadillac. That was not the impression that the port workers of Pier 21, where we landed gave me. Not knowing the language, the Emigration Department welcomed us and subdivided us on the basis of the number written on the card which we had hanging from our neck. Awaiting to climb aboard the train, at the counter of a bar in order to drink a beer with some travelling companions, he wondered why his order was ignored: he understood the different custom, when someone accompanied him to sit down at a small table (no counter service).*

After three days by train, all in all not bad, he arrived at St. Paul l'Eremitte of Montreal, a military base converted to accept refugees coming from everywhere: *there must have been 5/6,000.*

Precarious was the employment situation, the preliminary hiring contracts were cancelled. He accepted to enter into a team of lumberjacks: six months in the forest, with over two metres of snow, 700 miles away from Montreal, close to Labrador.



Odoni in a bathing suit defies the minus 40 degree temperature for the fun of posing for a souvenir photograph

They were paid 6 dollars for a cord (practically a 1 x 2 metre pile of wood), but Odoni's group lacked experience. It was however an experience supported by youthfulness and integrated by the joking spirit of Teodoro who, in a bathing suit, defied the 40 degree below temperature for the fun of posing for a souvenir photograph. A chain of employment improvisations followed, from Labrador to Ontario passing through Montreal: a porter loading wood on large boats, a guardian of an airplane that went off the airstrip due to snow, a stoker aboard ships, a guard at the beer bottling line, a miner in Sudbury, a painter. It was 1958 when Teodoro Odoni chose to go permanently in the painting business. He began in a small way, from painting private homes to the commercial sector, until becoming a successful entrepreneur creating an industry with a staff of 90 workers.

A few years later at a dance he met a French Canadian girl: she has been his wife for over 40 years. They had two children, but unfortunately in 1984 they experienced the drama of losing their male child at the age of 22. Their daughter, married to a famous lawyer in Toronto, has made them grandparents three times.

He has returned to Istria about ten times, with a Canadian passport and his surname: Odoni.



Odoni watches over an airplane that run off the airstrip due to the snow

CELESTINO AND MARIA PETRETTI

Eh, I'm old... I was born on the 13th May, 1920 at Caldier, close to Montona – highlights Celestino Petretti, starting off with a tired voice the narrative of his life experience. Solicited to talk about his adolescence and his youthful plans, he summarizes those years at school, which he attended unwillingly, and at work on the family's piece of land in the countryside. A family in which there were 10 people: besides his parents, he had five brothers and two sisters. His existence was perhaps boring, the same, day after day. However he could have, willingly done without the change he was forced to take at the start of the war, when he was twenty years old: first in Libya then, as a prisoner of the British, in Egypt and South Africa. *We were 300,000 prisoners there* – he specifies. Embarked for England, he arrived there after a three month crossing and under German bombardments.

At the end of the war, passing through Trieste but animated by the desire of returning to his town, he refused the opportunity to work at the ACEGAT. Imaginable is his regret for the missed opportunity when, having bumped into the new reality of Tito's regime, he found himself having to leave Istria, with only the clothes he was wearing. It was 1947. Settled into the shelter for refugees on via Gambini in Trieste, he would make ends meet by occasionally working as a porter in the port. His remuneration was thousand Italian liras per day.

Having met up with a few of his brothers, who after having opted for Italy, had a piece of land in the countryside assigned to them in the province of Siena, he helped them to move with the livestock which they had brought from their village. Meantime, having regained contact with a farmer, whom he met during his stay beyond the English Channel, he decided to move to England. After four years of work in the English countryside, he read in a newspaper that Canada was in search of manpower. So he wrote to his father about his intention to emigrate. Enthusiastic was his father's response, who informed him that, beyond the ocean, he would be able to meet up with his brother Nini. *800 British pounds, a 17 hour flight to Montreal and then a train in order to reach my brother* – the summary of that trip towards a new chapter of his life. It was 1952. For 18 years Celestino would have worked for the mining company of Sudbury, 460 miles from Toronto. The main extraction was of nickel, employing 20,000 workers between the mine and the foundry.

Having retired, he returned to farming, by purchasing the land around the house where he now lives, in the neighbourhood of Hamilton, producing grapes, fruit and vegetables, crops that are rather labour intensive. Thus he had to stop some years ago due to his advanced age.

Celestino has returned many times to Istria, embittered to see his village abandoned and in ruins. *He would leave right away to see it again, but he cannot leave me in these conditions* – intervenes his wife, Maria Stefanich, forced into a wheelchair due to the hard trials which she was subjected during her life. Her life was difficult right from the beginning, which defining it as colourless could sound almost as a wish. She too born close to Montona – Stefanici as Maria specifies – in 1928, the sixth of twelve children, was the first of the two females. A family mentality which privileged the males, forced her ever since she was little to suffer and to renounce: *a lot of misery and a lot of work, both in the fields and at home* – was her narrative. *I had to get up in the middle of the night to bake bread or to prepare the mash for the animals. I would go to school at most twice a week. I never had new shoes or a coat. I would only wear sweaters which we would make at home. Friends or having fun did not exist.*

Having made it through the war, in 1948 she was accused together with her father of having helped in the escape of a brother to Italy. After a week long court trial in Pisino, she was condemned to five years of forced labour. Locked up in many prisons, where the temperature was many degrees below zero, harsh was the regime which she was subjected to, suffering from hunger and without the possibility of being able to change her clothing: we were given a uniform for summer on the 1st May, and the winter one on the 1st October. A lot of her health was sacrificed in the construction of the Zagreb-Belgrade highway. She finished her last period of detention, working in a leather accessories factory for the armed forces. Having served her sentence, an older brother, who was able to study and who had reached a discreet position, did all he could in order to get her a passport to reach Celestino, who in the meantime had submitted her recall from Canada.

On the 12th July, 1958, her wedding was celebrated and a new life began. The mother of three children, in Canada she found a bit of peace, but in any case still a lot of work: from the restoration of the house which she lived in – bought in a crumbling state – to helping her husband in the fields, to the borders staying in their house.

She saw Istria again together with her husband. Her nephews have opened up a restaurant where her house once existed.

LUCIANO AND ALDO BENEDETTI

It is a story rebuilt by two voices, having begun for both brothers at Capodistria: the one of Luciano in 1937 and the one of Aldo in 1944. They are fragments of

memories which contribute towards tracing the image of their family, which grew during the war due to the unification of two nuclei. *Our father and our uncle had been recalled and so we all lived together: mum, aunt, grandparents and cousins. Mother was a seamstress and auntie helped grandpa in the fields. We lived in an old house, close to the church of the Cappuccini. We even had a second one in the countryside, but it was then burnt by the Germans, after the bombardment of the Rex. The countryside provided us with enough food.*

During the postwar period instead, with Zone A being divided from Zone B, the produce of the land could no longer be sold in Trieste, because the new Yugoslav regime didn't allow people to cross the border with more than 2 kilograms of merchandise per person. Shopping could only be done with ration cards. *In 1947, all the representatives of the clergy were chased away. At school, where at least 95% of the students were Italian, we still continued to speak our language. Daily life was limited by the evening curfew, due to the presence in the town of 20,000 soldiers. There were, however, some tangible signs of disturbance against the Italians, both verbal and material. It was necessary to be very careful with one's own manifestations, this being something which made the eldest limit themselves in their drinking at the inn, out of fear of slipping into the "in vino veritas". In fact, "informers" were not missing, ready to go to refer words and thoughts in their own way. Even if we were children, a great tension in the air could be felt, still indelible and difficult to describe to whoever did not experience it.*

At the signing of the Memorandum of London, the Benedettis decided to leave. Luciano was the first one to leave in 1954 due to compulsory military service that was just around the corner. Having said goodbye to his parents just a kilometre before the border and welcomed in Italy by a couple of uncles, on the very same evening he found accommodation in one of the tin shacks of the refugee camp of Opicina. A few months later the rest of the family arrived, which was, however, housed at Padriciano. *We left our furniture in the warehouses at the port. How beautiful mum's bedroom was, massive, with all those inlays, the grains...*

Luciano began to work as a carpenter for the San Giusto furniture factory, while Aldo – who liked to study – having finished elementary school in the camp, was sent to the Zandonai College of Pesaro. Having completed the secondary school however, his wish to continue studying was not fulfilled, due to the family's meagre earnings. Upon returning to Trieste, his father found him a job as an apprentice carpenter in the boatyard of Androna Santa Tecla. *It was not easy to push the boats down through Salita Promontorio (narrow steep street) and reach Sacchetta (a small bay for boats in Trieste). In order to transport the hulls, they would use appropriate slides drawn*

by oxen. As they advanced bit by bit, I had to move the supports below. I worked there for three and a half years.

In the meantime Luciano had managed to have himself moved to the shelter on via Negrelli: *immediately after the Seminary* – he explains – *50 people in a room, a toilet and a sink. However, I could at least save on the electric streetcar ticket in order to go down from Opicina camp.* Due to a lack of space at Padriciano, even the other Benedettis had been moved: at camp Marzio, where their parents remained for 12 years.

In 1957, Luciano decided to go to Canada, where on the 21st March he landed in Halifax. *It was freezing cold and I did not even have a penny. I had been dismissed from the camp with 35,000 Italian liras: they had served as a part payment for the trip, which cost 150,000 Italian liras.*

After three months work on a farm on the outskirts of Montreal, for 40 dollars a month, he moved to Hamilton, where he had a friend who helped him to find accommodation and a job in the construction sector. Having specialized himself as a carpenter, he later managed to start his own company, working with success in the building construction and in the manufacturing of furniture.

Having married a girl originally from the Abruzzo region of Italy, in 1961 he went back to Italy on his honeymoon, while there he fascinated his brother with the Canadian opportunities. ...and so even Aldo hopped aboard the m/v Saturnia. *Money did not grow on trees, however actually from the weekly 5,000 Italian liras which I earned after four years as an apprentice carpenter; I went to earn 30,000-40,000 Italian liras* – he tells, surely advantaged at that time by the help of his brother Luciano.

The Benedetti brothers – as almost all the rest – for a while continued to take the experience beyond the ocean as a temporary one. *It was decided never to go back again when the children began to go to school* – explains Aldo, married to a woman originally from Padova. Both of them, however, feel that Canada has given them a lot.

Having returned to Italy on many occasions, particularly great was the emotion felt upon their first visit to Capodistria, especially seeing other people living in their house. They still have the photo of it, snapped over fifty years ago, with the cherry tree flowering *with unique and beautiful colours* – specifies Luciano.

Even the two pear trees survive planted by their grandfather in the 1930s: a few years ago he was able to pick a few of its fruits and bring them to Canada.

ANTONIO STANISSA

At that time it was a modest house, made of stone, planks of wood on the ground. Now it is one of the most beautiful in the town, right behind the church. The place, however, was and has always remained splendid. There was a mixture of enthusiasm and melancholy in the words of Antonio Stanissa, while he talks about Torre di Parenzo, where he was born in 1934, in a family with four children.

His life is very similar to the one of many of his companions of postwar misadventure: Italian school right up to the fourth year of elementary studies, then the imposition of Croatian and the discomfort of assimilating an unknown language. His father, having returned from imprisonment in Germany, alternated work in the fields with the one in a cooperative. He tried to live out his life with maximum privacy: *he did not want to have anything to do with anyone. However, who was supporting the government, was surely better off*—observes Stanissa. There was misery and a better future could not be seen. Antonio would go by with a bit of fishing. In all secrecy, in view of compulsory military service, he organized his escape to Italy together with a cousin of his and another three friends. They waited for good weather and then one evening they left aboard a flat-bottomed boat pretending to go fishing. They wanted to head towards Trieste, but various difficulties, not last the fact of having bumped into the vessels of the militia twice, made them reach the mouth of the Tagliamento River. It was 8:30 am of the 7th September, 1954. As baggage, they had only the clothes they were wearing. After a first precarious accommodation in Venice, where they were registered as refugees, they were transferred to the camp of Frascette of Alatri, in the province of Frosinone. An area in the limelight surely not for its positive fame: in fact, it gathered together people of all nationalities coming from everywhere, often even violent or with a not too clean background. It was necessary to be on alert. They managed to have themselves transferred to the section of the Julian exiles. A bit of a “better” adjustment: 60 in a shack, food to be collected with the mess tin... *As refugees it was not even possible to expect certain things. It was necessary to consider everything and behave well.*

After various hypotheses for his future, debated between the possibility of a construction job in Trieste with an uncle of his and the transfer to a sister of his in England, he thought about Canada as a good solution and so he left. He embarked in Naples aboard the ship Conte Biancamano, on its last voyage. The voyage was not all that bad, but the impact with Halifax was depressing. Separated from his friends with whom he had shared the camp and the trip, he was sent to work in a factory in the vicinities of Winnipeg: *11 hours a day for 100 dollars a month and little food.*

I was young and I was really hungry, but there were even those who were worse off.

After a brief passage through Sudbury, there was the arrival in Hamilton: *the salary was 28 dollars a week, working in a butcher store; I had to pay 21 dollars just for board and lodging* – he explains. Jobs and transfers followed, right up until the definitive landing at the Ford factory in Hamilton, where he worked for 36 years, with a discreet satisfaction, in the assembling section.

Married to a Dutchwoman, he had two children, who now regret not having learnt Italian. If he was able to go back in time, he does not think he would return to Canada, even if when he left Italy life was rather hard: *we went to Rome to sell our blood in order to earn additional 3,000 liras, because working in the fields, we earned 100 Italian liras a day. I even had to quit smoking.*

After many decades beyond the ocean, by now he even counts a lot of friendships within the Canadian sphere: *our own people are becoming fewer and fewer, it is the rule of life.*

His thought towards Italy is of regret: due to the disparity of treatment, due to the missed recognition and compensation for the Istrian sacrifice. *But the water has gone under the bridge and there is not a lot to be expected and to suggest* – he concludes.

ERICH AND IVETTA EISENBICHLER

It is an Istrian story, which sinks its roots way back in time and in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the one lovingly told by Mr. Erich. Franz Joseph, in fact, was reigning, when his father – a men's and women's hairdresser – left his native Graz in order to go to work in a hair salon in Lussinpiccolo. Having concluded a parenthesis in Sicily as a volunteer among the rescuers of the victims of the earthquake in Messina, upon his return to the Quarnerine island he employed as a helper a girl from Vienna, whom he married soon after. After the First World War – which saw Eisenbichler's father recalled by the Austrian army and his mother return to Vienna – Erich's parents reopened a shop in Lussinpiccolo, where he was born in 1920. *Carefree years in a paradise* – are the words formulated at the memory of his island and his sea. *I spoke Italian at school, while I would respond in Lussignan to my parents, who spoke to me in German. This was the reason for which I was sent to Austria for a year and a half, in order to perfect myself in the family's language. Having completed compulsory education, I joined my father in his trade.*

Of Austrian nationality, with the outbreak of the Second World War, as a result of the Anschluss, Erich found himself having to wear the German army uniform.

I was assigned to the gunners, but I was not at ease with the cannons and so I asked to be transferred in order to be an interpreter. After a specialization course in Germany, I lived in Verona, Perugia, Rome... Mine was more an office work, but in any case I never had problems relating to people. There was a good relationship with the inhabitants of the various cities, who would familiarly address me as Mister interpreter. The end of the war found him outside of Brescia, at Sarnico. He was able to get back his Austrian identity and returned to Lussino, where he met Ivetta, his future wife with a d.o.c. (denomination of controlled origin) surname: Martinolich.

Lussinpiccolo is something marvellous. Good air and always warm water – the salient notes with which she traces her land, where she was born in 1926. A beautiful life, we were young, we would dance, we would go swimming. She was a young girl when the war broke out, *but our youthfulness helped us* – is her consideration.

After their marriage in 1948 and the birth of their son Konrad in 1949, the young Eisenbichlers lived in Austria for a few years, where their second child was born in Vienna. Their little daughter Erika instead was born in Genoa, where the couple met up with Ivetta's family members, who opted for Italy.

Erich chose the way of the sea and for five years ran a hair salon aboard the ship Arosa Star, a passenger ship belonging to a Swiss Maritime Company. It was an opportunity in order to see a bit of the whole world and in order to learn to appreciate Canada. The news of the dramatic Hungarian events of 1956, which reached him in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, hurried his decision to distance his family from Europe, so as to make his children avoid the risks and the consequences of a war. Having had himself recalled by his hairdressing colleagues, with whom he had forged a friendship in Canada, he first left in order to be able to prepare the successive settlement of his family members. A journey which on the whole was tranquil, right from the very beginning of his emigration: the crossing aboard the ship Conte Biancamano, the landing in Halifax, the arrival in Hamilton, a good job immediately, suitable to his profession. After a few months Ivetta and the children joined him. This trip too was marked by positive notes: the crew was mainly from natives of Lussino, so they had special treatment.

Eisenbichler smiles in remembering when his family arrived, he had fun making his wife fear the most precarious accommodation and stunning her with the welcoming house that he had prepared for her.

The years which followed were intense but with a solid aim: for Ivetta first the job in a shoe factory and then in a typography; for Erich from a jointly owned salon to his own. Not to forget the success of their children; special mention for Professor Konrad, director of the Renaissance Study Centre at the University of Toronto.

The story told by Erich Eisenbichler is a serene one, which can even be seen in the smiling expression of this eighty-year-old boy.

GILDA DIONIS widow NETTO

Born in Crassizza, in the vicinities of Buie, in 1937, the experience which life subjected her to in her childhood years was certainly not a children's experience. Her first memories are vague, which however take her back to the war and to the fluttering fear which resulted from it in the following years: first of all the search of her home on the part of the Germans looking for food, then her father Amedeo taken by the partisans and her mother imprisoned in Buie for a few days, for having been accused wrongly of having spat at her husband's kidnappers. The man, having been brought to the edge of the *foibe*, was saved thanks to the intervention of an acquaintance who gave testimony of his qualities and virtues. Though freed, he continued however to be pursued in sight, thus he decided to flee to Italy, to one of his sister's place in Trieste. The rest of the family met up with him after some time, by leaving one night, furtively. The details are not clear in Gilda's memory, who however remembers the escape: for a certain stretch aboard a truck and then aboard a steamship, with which they reached Trieste. She, her mother and two smaller brothers. It was 1949. Everything was behind them: the house, the furniture, the fields which her mother tilled with a lot of commitment and sacrifice. For a while they were heaped together in the basement of her aunt's house. They successively went from a provisional accommodation in a room under the stairs of the Ferdinando – where a welcoming centre for refugees had been activated – to the upper floor of the building, where tens of families lived in promiscuity, separated by dividing canvasses stretched on cords pulled from one wall to another. *There were common toilets, in order to have a wash it was necessary to go downstairs to get water, cooking was done on a small burner resting upon a small table* – is her story.

After about a year, they were moved to a small house in the district of Chiarbola. Her father worked in construction, her mother was a cook. Due to the war and the distance of her house from the school, in Istria, Gilda had not finished her studies, therefore as a first job she went to work as a domestic helper in family homes. She then found work in a pastry shop and finally in an American shoe factory.

The decision to emigrate to Canada on the part of her parents was rather sudden and caught her by surprise. She above all regretted having to leave behind so many nice friends, in particular Giorgina, a girl of the same age originally from Salvore,

whom she had known for a very long time and with whom she still keeps in contact today.

They reached Halifax aboard the m/v Saturnia. Their Canadian experience started in Kingston, cooperating in rearing egg-laying chickens, with a farmer of German origin who had ten children. *It wasn't bad, but the farm was isolated and far from everything.* Mother Dionis – a determined woman as always – got down to finding better accommodations in Hamilton, closer to Buffalo, in the United States, where some relatives of hers lived. And she managed. Once having moved, the lady was able to resume her job as a cook, while her husband and children found jobs in the construction industry. In 1959, at a dance at the local Venetian association, young Gilda was struck by Paolo, a boy originally from Treviso, working in the construction industry and an exceptional dancer. She became Mrs. Netto after only four months after that encounter. A union gladdened by 2 children and which lasted 37 years, until when her husband unfortunately passed away. Even father Dionis is no longer around, while the energetic mum, at the time of the interview, was well over 94 years old. Gilda, at a certain point in her life, followed in her footsteps in the catering business and finally became a successful chef.

During the years she has lost the cadence of our dialects and her children do not speak Italian, even if they understand it: they banished it while they were very young, at the time in which expressing oneself in one's own language was the object of ridicule and being ostracised.

With all of her family she saw her native land for the first time after about 20 years, *but by now Istria belongs to the memory* – she concludes.

In the ferment of the activities by the Italian Associations in Canada, we can find all of Italy, sometimes through the songs of the Italian alpine corps soldiers or sometimes through the songs of our younger days. In summer, picnics are organized every week. It is very beautiful...

MARIA DUBAZ widow FACHIN

The childhood memories which cohabitate and clash in her memory are contrasting. *I was born on the 2nd February, 1925, at Crassizza, rebaptized Villa Gardossi during the fascist era, in the municipality of Buie d'Istria. I had three sisters and a brother. The years of my childhood were beautiful. I belonged to the Catholic Action movement and I sang in the church choir. Upon the advice of the parish priest, later on I even learnt to play the piano.*

The family could count upon a good lifestyle thanks to the farm which they owned, equipped with a hydraulic press and quality harvesters.

The first drama was the loss of the father, who died at the age of 35, when Maria was just twelve years old. She respected her parent's will, who wanted her to finish her schooling, and she subjected herself to the eight kilometres that she had to walk on a daily basis on foot, in order to go and come back from the school in Buie.

If the war ruined everything, the postwar period was even worse. Life in those days was marked by fear. *I am still not sure about the reason for the load of hatred poured by certain fellow townspeople upon people who perhaps in the past had helped them out. Tito's troops came from outside and could not know their victims. It was understood that some information were given by someone. Perhaps it was determined by jealousy* – is her thought.

Even the Dubaz family was struck: one of Maria's cousins was killed, one of her uncles and another cousin of hers were brutally beaten up and had to be admitted to the hospital in Trieste. The family members could not pay them a visit, because there was the prohibition to cross the border with Italy. It was 1947. The hope still survived for a while in the family that things would take care of themselves. They worked the fields and the young woman helped her mother with her job as a seamstress. She got married: *what sadness! in the empty church, at five o'clock in*



After the arrival in Canada, a meeting with the immigration coordinators, informative conversations and selection for a potential job (courtesy of Mr. Mitchinson)

the morning, hidden out of fear that the religious wedding could cause the firing of my husband from his job. He was from Villanova del Quieto and he worked in the mines – she tells. In 1956, came their decision to leave Istria. In the meantime their first daughter was born.

Exiled in Trieste, the Fachin family was sent to the camp of Padriciano. I am sincerely thankful for the help received, however it is difficult to forget life in the shack, the queue for meals with the mess-tin. We understood that we had no future there and we were taken up by the propaganda made in the camp by the Canadian operators. I chose Montreal as a destination, because Monte Reale sounded to me like a foreboding of something beautiful and important.

They did not know anything about Canada. They arrived there with the support of the IRO, aboard a four-engine airplane, after two stopovers and a 28 hour flight. They landed in Quebec City and it was not an exciting impact. They were examined – as was well-known by now – like heads of livestock at a fair. The farmer who chose them, wore the usual shabby working clothes matching his appearance. He accompanied them to the countryside with his pick-up truck, his shabby outfit strikingly contrasted with Maria's elegant dress and her high heels. What shocked her was the little bed prepared for her daughter: two planks with a bit of hay on top. *It looked to me like the manger of the Child Jesus* – she now smiles. The overall accommodation was not all that bad and her husband willingly adapted to work in the fields and in the caring of the livestock. *He was a specialist in looking after the cows. It almost seemed that he managed to be understood by them...*

Having made friends with an Italian family – the Lucchesi – they received the support from them in order to manage to move to the city. The head of the family found a job as a mechanic in the local automotive factory. Maria instead was helped by the parish priest for a job in a boutique as a seamstress. Having specialized in the creation of maternity wear, she even featured in a television programme.

Following Maria's desire to be closer to a sister of hers who lived in the United States, the final destination was to move to Hamilton, where she resumed her job as a seamstress and her husband was hired by a company that made railway carriages.

She became a mother three times and a grandmother four times. Now a widow, a few years ago she suffered for the premature loss of a daughter.

She has returned to Istria several times, where she saw her house again, in a dilapidated condition.

PIETRO ANTOLOVICH

He remembers with a smile his childhood years in San Lorenzo del Pasenatico – in Parentino – where he was born in April of 1928: *I did not know that life could be better and more comfortable* – he specifies.

He lived in the countryside, in a numerous family. His father had actually won the government prize for having many children. He had six brothers and two sisters. The house was very old. According to the agricultural and patriarchal tradition, it went along slowly expanding through generations and the creation of new family nuclei: *today it would probably be long like a train* – he jokes.

His father was a farmer and looked after the fields and its produce: cereal, potatoes, vines, olive trees. Pietro would help him, when he was not in school; or better still, he would often have to take the livestock to the pasture before classes. *It took two kilometres walk in order to reach school, even in the snow. The shoes would not keep the water out, and so I would end up with wet feet until my return home, where at first there was the big hearth and then the wood-burning stove, arriving with progress* – he jokes. *It surely was a system to create antibodies and make me stronger. As an adult I would have loved to have been a mechanic or a driver.*

The drama of the war was closely felt by his family, with a terrible history of informing: a brother of his – having returned to the village, after five years in the Italian army and recruited by partisan formations – was killed by the Germans.

During the postwar period, after a brief working experience in the town's blacksmith shop, he became an apprentice mechanic at Arsa. Called to perform three years of compulsory military service in the Yugoslav army, young Antolovich found himself unable to exercise his *right of option to remain Italian*, as his sisters had done. After they had left for Italy, he moved to their house in Rovigno, finding a job as a mechanic in the tobacco factory. The plan of leaving was brewing, but organizing the departure was not easy. It was not even easy to stay, especially for a family like his, particularly disliked by the regime because of that brother of his, a priest in Trieste. They were able to hug him once again in Capodistria, after so many years of forced absence, taking advantage of the permission granted by Tito to the Istrians of being able to meet in Zone B with family members residing in Italy. The Antolovich brothers made the trip under the camouflaged control of the secret police, who however... did not know that Peter knew: the intelligence notions learnt during military service, in fact, helped him.

Upon returning to Rovigno, they decided to escape: Peter, a brother of his with his wife and small 15 month old son and a friend. They upgraded a rowboat with

a Bianchi motorcycle motor – made from spare parts – and they waited for good weather. Having simulated an evening out fishing, his brother took on board the rest of the company in a hidden harbour. The weight of the passengers made the edge of the vessel go down a lot, so much so that they found that they were sitting on water. The adventure continued when, in the middle of the sea and in the deep of the night, they found themselves trying to fix the ruptured fuel line. The motor had conked out, but their heart was pounding hard. Fortune had it that they bumped into the Barca Maria, a boat filled with inhabitants of Trieste, who took them on board, taking them to their city. Welcomed by the Coast Guard alerted by the commander who had rescued them, the odyssey began amidst the welcoming camps: San Sabba in Trieste – *the best*, he makes clear – Cremona, Bari, where they arrived in December of 1956. *We chose to go to Canada, because Italy did not put up with refugees. And then there was already too much unemployment.* They left from Naples with one of the last trips aboard the m/v Vulcania. All they knew about Canada was that it was very cold and the place where *Pinco Panco* (a character in the popular song *La Casetta in Canada*) built and rebuilt his little house.

After the usual initial uncertainties of adaptation, the first job was in the paper mill of Terrace Bay. The approach with the language was not too difficult, because the boss in the workshop was of Italian origin and even his working companions were immigrants. His girlfriend – met during the time of the stopover in Bari – caught up with him: they got married in Hamilton, where he moved to in order to enter as a mechanic in a big iron and steel company, and where he worked for 25 years.

Twice a father – his daughter is a teacher, his son an electronic engineer – and four times a grandfather, he makes an overall positive balance of his existential turn, though in the regret of seeing his family scattered throughout the world: Canada, Rome, Milan, Trieste, Rovigno.

In 1969, he returned for the first time to Istria, where he felt a little disheartened to see his house inhabited by other people. After various visits, he hopes to return once again together with his little grandson, curious to see the old house-museum of his grandfather.

FRANCESCO MANZIN

Invited to formulate his first thought which spontaneously connected him to the memory of Dignano, where he was born on the 15th June, 1938, the instinctive response – with an American pronunciation – was: *I love Dignano, I love Istria.*

He remembers the many friends amongst his classmates. In the family, there were his parents, a sister, his grandmother. *The house – typical, in the Venetian style – was on Castello Street, in the district of Portarol: there was the wine cellar, where wine, cereals and olive oil were kept, the kitchen with the grandmother's room above, two bedrooms on the third floor, the attic...* The father was a farmer; therefore we were autonomously self-sufficient with regard to food necessities. We lacked other things, but we never went hungry, not even during the time of the war. A small child at the time, the air raids, the bombardments, the escapes, however, remained impressed up his memory. Actually on one occasion, his father was wounded by some shrapnel. He remembers his mother taking him to the hospital on a cart pulled by horses.

Of the immediate postwar period, he recalls the atmosphere of anxious insecurity which was setting in: the separation from his maternal grandmother and aunts, leaving for Milan; his paternal grandmother and father, decided in defending their land in the countryside and not giving into the new regime, which wanted to seize their produce. Due to his refusal to enter into the social cooperative, one night his father was arrested and then condemned to six months of forced labour on the railway. After his release and the umpteenth refusal to hand over his land to the collective enterprise, he found himself coerced as to “volunteer”: in the summer for the grain harvest, in the winter at the oil mill. Francesco completed eight years of schooling at the Italian school. The problem arrived with his registering at the technical institute, where the use of Croatian was mandatory: the forced learning of a language that was not his own, was difficult and hard to accept.

Francesco began to plan his escape. He was 17 years old and worked in his capacity as a mechanic at the bus company. On the 31st January, 1956, he climbed aboard the train for Maribor, pretending that he was going to visit a family member in those parts. In his plan, the idea of jumping off the train, once he arrived in the vicinities of Sesana. It was not an easy enterprise, due to the suspicions of the ticket inspector aboard, who did not believe his reasons of the trip and had alerted the railway police. The boy found himself having to face the checks of the officers who, at every stop, minutely verified the disembarkations of the passengers. The adrenaline was at its peak: his youthful thoughtlessness had to measure itself up with a lot of fear. He found the solution after a stop, in the moment in which the train was resuming its journey: withdrawing to the bathroom close to the exit platform and with the militias having returned to the compartment, he gained control of the wagon's door and jumped out. *I fled like a hare, frightened by the fact that I found myself in the middle of the woods, in a territory that I did not know. It was growing dark, the light that I was catching a glimpse of at the end, told me that that was Trieste. I arrived in*

Muggia and I entered a bar to have a coffee. Subsequently, they explained to me that it could have been a rash act of imprudence: plainclothes Yugoslavian emissaries, as a matter of fact, were going around waiting for fugitives at the border area, in order to bring them back. Having explained his origins to the café owner, the man called the police to assist Francesco, who was brought to the police station, where he found also some refreshment. A week followed in the youth sector of the Coroneo (prison in Trieste) for checks on his origin. He was treated well and he could count on the cooperation of a prison guard, in order to have a postcard delivered to his family members informing them that he was well. The choice of the day of the escape had, in fact, been the fruit of an improvisation, thus his parents – up until then unaware of everything – lived in anxiety due to the rumours which went around the town, on the outcomes of the shots fired from the train after his daring escape.

Frightened by a transient stopover in the very crowded refugee camp of Udine, he was able to be hosted by a family from Trieste until the arrival of his maternal uncle from Milan, who did all he could in order to have him moved to his grandmother's place in the Lombard city. It was an ugly period: for the Croats he was Italian and for the Italians he was Yugoslavian, therefore it was difficult to find a job, insofar as he had remained without nationality and without citizenship.

During the journey through his memory, Manzin recalls his resentment towards Italian bureaucracy, worse than that of Yugoslavia or Croatia: *at first they bartered me as war reparations, then they even took away my nationality.* Confirming his assertion, he shows a document released to him attesting the fact that he is a foreigner in Italy, of Yugoslavian nationality. On the contrary, he shows a report card from the 1953/1954 school year, in which the People's Republic of Croatia certifies his Italian nationality. Returning to the first period of his experience as a refugee in Italy, he remembers how the only possibilities for work were some "illegal" jobs in construction. His grandmother began to suggest Canada to him as a future alternative, considering that beyond the ocean, in the postwar period, one of his father's sisters had already moved there. So in March of 1960 he climbed aboard the ship "Saturnia" heading towards Halifax: he left springtime behind him, but snow and a lot of cold ended up welcoming him. Hosted in his aunt's house in Hamilton, he had problems settling in due to the difficulties in learning English. *Notwithstanding the fact that many years had gone by, I still find a few obstacles in speaking good English* – he specifies. *I never knew Italian and I never learnt English.*

My first jobs were in construction. *I missed Milan, but I could not go back, because I did not want to find myself again in the condition of being a non-Italian Italian.*

With time he adapted himself to the new country, which turned out to be a good place to live in. He even met his wife, of Sicilian origins, to whom he has been married for over forty years. Parents of two boys and a girl, who have attained good working positions in the fields of teaching and computers, they are now the grandparents of six grandchildren.

With regards to his working life, Manzin worked for thirty years in the steel mill, where he managed to reach an adequate qualification.

Unforgettable was his first return to Istria, in 1966, the year after he got married: *as soon as I saw the outline of the bell tower of Dignano, I got a lump in my throat. And the emotion renews itself every time I go back.*

Only God knows what my life would have been like without Canada. It is a country which offers possibilities to whoever has the will to fulfil himself. And in my case I even found a solution: a judge established that I am of Italian nationality and of Canadian citizenship.

MARIO AND FRANCA LORENZUTTI

“Mine was a typical Istrian family in those days”. These are the words with which Mario Lorenzutti starts his story, *“born in the hospital of Capodistria on the 14th March, 1940, but native of Isola”* – he specifies. A patriarchal family – with the grandfather, the parents, the uncles and aunts – who lived in a three storeyed house. *Actually, my father, at the moment of my birth had been recalled to Africa, so much so that when he returned home, I did not recognize him.* This being a sad memory which, in experiencing it once again, is so emotional for Mario, that he has to stop for a while.

Even if he was just a child in those years, he harbours various memories of the period of the war; *there were always less men in the town, because they were sent to the front. In my family, besides me and my brother, there was only my grandfather.*

Isola up until then had been considered to be the most cheerful and carefree city of Istria. The Arrigoni and Ampelea companies, famous canning industries, guaranteed work not only for the residents, but even for the inhabitants of the surrounding areas. They counted over 3,000 workers. With its lively activity, the port was busy and offered many jobs for dockworkers like his father.

Things changed dramatically with the wartime events. Notwithstanding the tender age of those days, Mario recalls the round ups of the Nazi-fascists and the widespread warning which resounded throughout the districts: *women, hide the men, the Germans are coming.* They would take them to Ancarano in order to dig antiaircraft

trenches. This being a reason, for which the women of the Lorenzutti household held it opportune to hide the grandfather – although old and not suitable for recruitment – in a closet, behind a wardrobe. The episode is connected to an anecdote, then dramatic but fortunately today a stimulus for a smile. Upon the German search of the house – *objectively in a polite manner*, he specifies – Mario, thinking about a hide and seek game, he began to sing *my grandfather is in the closet, my grandfather is in the closet and they cannot find him...* Fortunately, his words were not understood, the search ended and his grandfather re-emerged from the escaped danger, *chattering his teeth which he didn't have and as white as a ghost*, he scolded his grandson: *you are a dirty scoundrel who should be killed!*

Another childhood memory is tied to the bursting, early in the morning, of the port dam, which was blown up by the Germans before they retreated from the area. Rubble of earth and blocks of stone were disseminated throughout the whole town, including their house. Even then his grandfather was a protagonist, finding himself caught amongst the springs of the foldable camp bed which collapsed and closed upon itself. Less hilarious instead is the memory of all of the house's shattered windows, replaced with the tin of sardine cans, provided by the Arrigoni Company.

An incredible basin of memories, his childhood was even a witness of the sinking of the Rex. As usual, Mario was taken for a swim at the Punta del Gallo – more popularly called *on the rock*. *All of a sudden the rumbling of the approaching planes arrived, followed by the bombardment of the steamship, at the end between Isola and Capodistria, in the locality of Girocarrozze. Unforgettable was the confused yelling of the crowd watching the event, while the ancient glory of the sea rested on its side, amidst the flames.*

The war ended and his father Giovanni returned home. Understandable was the agitation of the first encounter, considering that the son, up until then, had only known him in photograph, in the uniform of *Bersagliere*. *Sent by my mother to bring him a towel, while he was in the basement having a bath in a wooden tub, I called him sir* – Mario's emotion.

The immediate postwar period seemed to present itself with an atmosphere of apparent normality: *at first we did not notice how our lives were about to change*. Mario attended the Italian school at Isola, his brother the one in Capodistria, however, every now and then someone started to disappear from the school. The hope of most of the people was: *here we are and here we will remain*, strengthened by the fact that their land had always been the theatre of various occupations. *Everybody had passed through here...*

It was understood what the definitive mark would be, on the elections of 1948 or

1949. *There was only one single voting list, my parents refused to go to the polls. Contemporarily, an acquaintance showed up at our home in order to inform them that whoever did not go to vote, was being beaten up or their houses were being vandalized. Scared, without the family members knowing it, my mother voted for everybody* – he continues.

With the growing discomfort and lack of freedom, the impositions of continuous changes followed, even within the sphere of established traditions: *the privately owned boat was confiscated in favour of the cooperatives; if a shop was owned, it was run by the people's power, because capitalism could not exist; processions through the town were forbidden, just as the sound of the bells was forbidden by justifying it with disturbance to the nearby hospital... The first to be banished were the priests, then followed by the intellectuals. In short, there were no leaders. Even the nuns, who were like mothers for us at the nursery school, were forced to be distanced. A nice family home, the fruit of the work of several generations, was confiscated because perhaps it had to be assigned to some notable...*

Hoping that something would change, but conscious of the changing of events, everybody left one by one. Reluctantly, even the Lorenzuttis forwarded their request, together with the list of the effects that they wanted to take away with them.

They left aboard a truck heading to Trieste, a city they had visited briefly before. The arrival was immediately very sad. It was the 8th February, 1956: household furnishings at the silos and settling into the refugee camp of Campo Marzio. Used to their little home, in which everyone had their own room, they found themselves settled into shacks, men separated from the women, the family divided. *The dormitory which I was destined to, had been a stable for horses of the Austrian army in 1915-1918. There were bunk beds and all kinds of people lived there, of all ages: there were those who complained, who fell asleep remembering Istria, those who... With the exception of the holiday camp, I had never slept before together with so many people.*

It was one of the coldest nights of one of the coldest winters in Trieste, with wind and snow. Mario's bed was close to the door, so much so that on the next morning he found snow on his bed and pants, hung up on the wall, frozen in the form of an upside down L-shape. He had to place them near the stove to melt and dry up in order to be able to put them on. As soon as he was able to go out, the boy offered himself as a shoveller in order to clear the railway tracks of snow, but taking into consideration his young age and the fact that he did not have gloves and a hat, he was not employed. Having a passion for ships, he then went to the shores, where he remained seated upon a bollard contemplating the ship Saturnia that was docked.

Given the bad climatic conditions and the precarious housing at Campo Marzio, they were moved to the old Austrian hotel by the sea in Sistiana, which was abandoned after the departure of the British of the GMA: 5 families per room, but at least a better shelter. *The Istrian has a good spirit of adaptation and in the evening, at the entrance, there was someone who with an accordion made us dance. And there I got to meet Franca.*

Franca Pitacco was a refugee from Sicciole, more precisely from the district of *Al Gorgo*, where she was born in 1944. Her family – rather large, besides her, her parents and her brother Fulvio, was even made up of a bachelor uncle and a cousin with wife and son – was discreetly well-off: they had a shop, with annexed bakery and an inn. They even had a bit of land and a *bragozzo* (a fishing boat) that was co-owned.

At the end of the war, through the intervention of the new power, every property seemed to dissolve itself into nothingness: the shop, confiscated without too many explanations, was assigned to a lady of the place who ran it for a few years, later transformed it into a tailor shop and finally she closed it down for good. The management of the bakery was taken over by the political party, and permission was given to the old owners to make bread once a week. The inn remained in the uncle's family, together with a girl from Maribor, imposed by the government Authority. The *bragozzo* which, before the war, had been used to take produce from the countryside to the market in Trieste, was converted to transport sand and gravel.

Continuous difficulties were appearing more and more. Reluctantly and with the eternal hope that something would change, the Pitaccos left their land on a bright sunny day: it was the 17th February, 1956. Having reached the border, the person in charge of controls showed himself to be extremely punctilious in checking out the effective conformity of the contents of their trunks with the authorized list. They already knew Trieste, where an aunt lived, who hosted them for the first days, thus avoiding the stop over in the camp of Campo Marzio. The transfer to Sistiana followed, where the first encounter between the Lorenzuttis and the Pitaccos took place: Mario was 15 years old and Franca was 11. For both families the move into the camp of Opicina followed: the settling in was in cabins with 3 bunk beds, a table and a cupboard. Mario for a few years attended the Duca D'Aosta College, destined above all for refugees and run by Father Marzari, while Franca became a student at the professional schools of Opicina.

The departure for Canada almost arrived casually in 1960. Having gone to the army medical visit, Mario went to enquire about the possibilities of emigrating to the U.S.A. The postings had been closed, but – they said to him – after having finished compulsory military service (he had been assigned to the Navy and therefore the service was much longer) he would have surely had some possibilities. Unexpectedly

a few days after, from the Emigration Office on via Baciocchi the call for Canada arrived, with departure within 5 weeks. Amidst the general incredulity, Mario boarded the Britannia aircraft, on its last voyage on the Hong Kong-Vancouver route: after 18 hours he arrived in Montreal together with another 200 boys, single like him (they would make the families travel by boat). During the crossing he jotted down on a piece of paper thoughts and emotions of the trip, as a kind of letter, which however was never sent, because he did not have the money for the stamp. The destination assigned was Chatham, but having arrived by train to Toronto, they discovered that the sugar factory had closed down and that, therefore, there was no work. The boys were made to climb aboard some buses and taken towards the area of the large cultivations. At every stop, a farmer would climb aboard who after having examined “the merchandise”, would choose the labourers who seemed to have the best requisites. Mario and his friends, although of modest conditions, were well-dressed, with a jacket and tie. They, therefore, seemed not to respond to the farmers’ need for manpower. In the vicinities of London finally, they were hired for a tobacco plantation. For them a totally new experience. In order to then be able to make a good impression, the night before starting on the job, they went to practice harvesting in the middle of the fields, in the moonlight. From that job, he went onto construction and successively onto mechanics, as a welder. At that point, he thought that the moment had arrived in order to bring over Franca. She was very young, she was 19 years old: the detachment from her family was not easy, but Mario was waiting for her. She too arrived on Canadian soil on a flight, she immediately had a positive impression of the country. The marriage confirmed the recurrence of the number 17 in her life: the day of the departure from Sicciole, of the departure for Canada, the number of guests at the wedding reception. A nice living together, in a place, however, where alcohol was not allowed: the final toast was in any case cheerfully reached, thanks to the complicity of the owner, who served the champagne in opaque glasses.

Their roots began to move: they understood that it was a question of something definitive when, with the permanent hiring of Mario at General Motors, they bought their house. The bond with Italy remained close, handed down even to their two children, who reached satisfying cultural and professional positions. With them they cheer for Italy during the international soccer games, but not only: they even follow *the Triestina* (the soccer team from Trieste).

The Lorenzuttis are sentimentals and amidst the many memories which bind them to their land of origin, even the stones brought from Istria, inserted into their pebble collection, brought as a souvenir a bit from every part of the world that has been visited.



Trieste, 24th May, 1960 – 5 o'clock in the morning. Mario Lorenzutti from the shacks of Villa Carsia climbs aboard the bus which will take him to the station to take the train for Rome, for the successive embarkation onto the Canadian Pacific flight



1960, the first Canadian winter of Mario Lorenzutti (2nd from the right): in the centre of Toronto with Mario Dagri, Virgilio Felluga and Franco Pertot, all from Isola d'Istria

ITALO LABINIAN

Probably the truest beginning would be to present this adventure as the one of Italo Albonese. The surname would be the original one, of which Italo, with regret, did not manage to get back.

His house was at no. 18 of the Laco district in Montona, where he was born in 1936. His father ran an inn there up until the dark years of the postwar period, when he was thrown into prison for a few months, at the time of Cominform. *They saw that he did not know anything about politics and they let him go free* – observes Italo. He and Riccardo, his younger brother, were young, but they however exhorted their father to sign the option to remain Italian as to be allowed to leave for Italy. *I am not going, this magnadora* (corruption) *will not last, the situation must change* – was the father's response. Loved by a lot of friends, opting and moving to Trieste, their frequent visits determined a tight control over the man by the regime, which suspected that he was involved in supporting escapes across the border.

Not even going to school was simple because of the war – explains Italo. *Between the war and the postwar period I managed to reach the sixth grade. As an adolescent, I combined attending school with the learning of the barber's profession.*

After 24 months of military service and marriage to Libera, a girl from Piemonte d'Istria, he moved to Capodistria. Living in *Zona B*, he, therefore, found himself having the possibility of going four times a month to Trieste, with the use of a pass. There Italo received in January of 1964 the visit of his father who, having accepted the reality of the facts, communicated to him his decision to leave Istria. By means of a telegram drafted ad hoc, he simulated the need to take a sick sister of his to Trieste urgently.

After a few days, his example was followed by Italo, who took advantage of one of the four monthly trips to slip away to Trieste, with his wife and small son, born in the meantime. He left everything, including the keys to his house, which he hid under a stone, outside the entrance. His mother, who had stayed behind at Montona with the other children, was given the task of disposing the things left behind.

After a period at the refugee camp of San Sabba, the Labinian jr. family were moved to the one of Latina, where they were able to meet up again with their father. The rest of the family – still in Istria – arrived later on, after having paid some smugglers.

Various were the destinations that were proposed back then, to start life again. Italo chose Canada, because he read a good review about it: the country was bordering U.S.A. and was less farther than Australia. *In any case we will stay there for*

five years, enough to take care of ourselves economically. Italy and Trieste, above all, are too beautiful for us to live far away. And then there are even the family members... was then his plan.

They embarked in Naples, aboard the Vulcania's last voyage. It was 1964. The first casual encounter in Halifax was with a native of Capodistria, who in the attempt of dissuading him from going to Toronto, made him risk missing the train. From adventure to adventure, from the embarrassment of the identification cards around the neck to the crossing of Toronto on foot in order to find the emigration office, passing amongst the eccentric people of a boarding house and a first job in a doll factory, Italo finally landed in a big barber salon in the far distant periphery of Toronto. Reached by the rest of the family and having professionally affirmed himself, thanks to a good mastery of the English language, after years of tiring commuting, he was able to work on his own, purchasing a house close to his store.

He has been in Hamilton for about a dozen years, after having retired from his job, in order to follow his son, co-owner of an important television production centre, specialized in the production of sport fishing programmes.

In Canada we are all accepted with respect, with an open heart, of course, however, the roots always remain... is his conclusion.

LINO AND MARIA CREVATIN

Little to wear and no shoes – is the summary of the first memories of Lino Crevatin, born at Corte d'Isola in 1943. There were eight children, of whom five were females. His mother was a housewife, his father a stonecutter. *5 of us would fit into a bed made for one person. I even had to go barefooted to graze the animals* – is his story. Due to the known events and the changes that arrived, in the postwar period they found themselves speaking a mixed language in the family: his older brothers would speak Italian, the younger ones Slovenian.

Lino never thought that he would have had to detach himself from his land, instead he found himself leaving after his marriage to Maria Orsi, whom he met at a dancing feast at San Bartolo.

Activating her movie camera of memories, the lady, born at Portole in 1944, ties the most far distant memory to a train ride towards Fiume: *they took me to take a photograph. In the carriage I was struck by a lady with a hat entirely full of sequins.* A sweet flash in a period which connects itself to dark moments of her childhood years, to the arrests of family members and her parents, to her uncle's forced labour,

in the mine of Albona. *My mother was put in prison, because she had tried to inform her brother in Fiume not to vote in favour of Yugoslavia and somebody had heard this and reported her.*

After various vain attempts at reaching Trieste, the Orsis moved to Strignano. Young Maria, having finished her eight years of schooling, found a job at the Arrigoni and Ampelea Companies. Until she met Lino, in the meantime hired at the Tomos, a motorcycle factory in Capodistria. The company in the city even had two skyscrapers, with apartments to be given to the workers who were starting a family. Having forwarded a request in such a sense, the Crevatins discovered that the assigning of the apartments was subjected to membership in the party in power. They refused, and a month later, they found themselves crossing the border, with a bag and the clothes they were wearing. It was 1962. The request for political asylum, a few days hospitality with some family members already in Trieste, the refugee camps: at Noghere, Padriciano... *Life was hard, however, I had always worked. Luckily it snowed a lot during that winter and so they would pick me up to shovel snow and even to deliver coal to the houses. And if there was a need, I would even go to work at the port. The springtime after, I even went to work in construction. That way we managed to have a bit of money.*

In 1963, Daniela was born, while their other family members arrived few at a time. Life continued in the Padriciano camp, struck on the 4th July of the following year by a storm, which actually uncovered some shacks. The idea of Canada came in after the visit to Trieste by one of Lino's sisters, who had already emigrated beyond the ocean. *Why not?* – the Crevatins thought – *in the end we're young, with suitcases we go and with suitcases we come back...*

On the 11th April, 1966, they boarded the ship Cristoforo Colombo, leaving Trieste for Halifax, where they arrived eleven days later. They received a good welcoming, because the Canadian customer Officer mistook Lino for his fellow townsman Nino Benvenuti, on top of his boxing career.

The first dwelling place in the new land was at the place of Lino's sister: he began to work as a gardener, his wife in the orchards. *It was a very hard job* – Crevatin tells – *that summer the temperatures went up to 40 degrees. I had to take care of the lawn, I was working close to houses that were being built. I was really thirsty and I did not have water to drink, therefore every now and then when the carriages delivering milk would pass by – still pulled by horses back then, I would buy a few litres of it in order to quench my thirst.*

Having then gone on to work in a construction company in Hamilton, the continuous transfers, even if penalizing to family life, allowed him to make a rapid

improvement in his standard of living and the purchase of a house a few years later.

The nostalgia for Italy, however, remained strong and, in 1971, they organized themselves for a six week holiday in Trieste. At the fourth week, seeing an airplane fly by, Lino turned to his wife: *take me home*. And she shared the choice. They had understood that Canada had become their home. And upon the return, the small family was blessed by the birth of Roberta in 1972 and Marco in 1973.

Many other trips to their land of origin followed, but by now they go there as tourists.

Grandparents of four grandchildren, a French son-in-law and a Polish daughter-in-law, they confess that their thought continues to fly towards Italy and Istria. And not only: in their kitchen garden they grow radicchio and local spinach, while Lino, as soon as he can, always tunes into the Italian television station.

GABRIELE ERASMI

His Canadian adventure had begun by chance... *and by crooked ways* – immediately highlights Professor Erasmi, a native of Trieste, who does not find the definition of person transferred for work to be correct.

I am a native of Trieste, but I spent very little time in Trieste – his story begins. In his native city until the age of nine, thanks to an ENPAS scholarship, he continued his studies in a college in Lombardia, finishing them in Friuli at the Paolo Diacono classical college of Cividale. Returning to Trieste for the first two years of university at the faculty of philosophy, he remembers smilingly the custom among the students chatting in dialect after classes, perhaps discussing Hegel. Whoever knew Erasmi was not surprised, but the others would ask themselves *where this man comes from*, due to the strange accent of his dialect, influenced by the accents absorbed during the long period spent away from home.

In order to support himself during his studies, he accepted the task of instructor in the college for orphans and refugees of Opicina, continuing the contact with the world of exiles, already started at the time of the boarding school of Cividale, mainly attended by the children of Julian exiles. One day, returning home – on foot, because he could not afford the ticket for the street car – he bumped into his friend Adriana Croci, coming from the USIS, the Italian-American cultural association active in the city, who informed him that she had made a request for a scholarship in America. He liked the idea so much that he moved immediately to the American counter, in order to make the same request. So he was assigned a scholarship to Yale, where

two years later he graduated. He passed the selection coming up fifth place amongst more than five hundred applicants, beating certain *mamma's pampered boys who were going away from home for the first time*, probably benefitting by his experience as an orphan, which made him face various trials on his own. He left Italy with a sufficient knowledge of English, assimilated in 1960 thanks to a hitchhiking trip throughout England, Scotland and Wales. During his study period at the American university, he was invited to the nearby Catholic University to talk about the Italian writers of Trieste. Heading the conference was the lady President of the Italian club of the faculty. *Getting to know each other and falling in love was the result* – he recalls. *Just fifteen days after our first encounter I proposed to her to become my wife, she thought that it was not a bad idea* – he continues smilingly. And the facts proved them right.

Having made a request for a research doctorate in classical literature, Erasmi wound up in Minnesota, beginning even to teach at the university. The visa which he possessed, however – granted for study purposes – was about to expire. Forced to make a request for another country, the first logical choice was Canada, immediately nearby. As an alternative he even thought about the American Universities of Beirut, in Egypt... *Thank God they sent me to Canada, not however to teach Greek and Latin, but Italian literature... Having left Italy in order to study for a year at Yale, I found myself in 1972 living and teaching at the University of Hamilton. Chance, heart and circumstances have it that I am still here.*

All things considered of his 40 years spent far from Italy, he specifies that his relationship with Trieste is more ideal than real: in all of these years he has returned there a few times, although even his wife and three children have gotten to know his land of origin and have fallen in love with it. Only four or five returns, even if the homesickness is always strong. He has, however, always had a conflictual relationship with his native city: *I remember the two years at the University of Trieste: they were strange. I was happy, but I felt as if I was in a trap. Many times, sitting on the Audace quay, I felt the oppression that the city made me feel: there were no prospects, no promising outlooks. It was an obscure feeling. I simply felt uncomfortable, oppressed by the will to escape* – he recalls.

But the will to return? *Is the irony of whoever left and never returned again* – is his definition.

With regards to the transformation of Canada from the time of his arrival, Erasmi does not find it all that radical: *it's the Italian community living here that transformed itself; they have almost completely integrated themselves into the Canadian world, naturally at the expense of the Italian language. If, in fact, the fathers worked at the*

ironworks, the children have instead become lawyers; except for the name of few Italian dishes and few phrases in dialect, English is spoken by now.

Flanking his significant academic journey, is Professor Erasmi's great passion for music, dates back to the time at the Lombard college, when the rector, on Saturday evenings, would make the students listen to the operas of Toscanini or arias of Gigli. Once having left that environment and having listened to the songs in fashion, he understood that popular music was not for him and that the only choice for him was classical music. *A friend of two students of a great bass musician, listening to them, I discovered bit by bit that I too had a diaphragm and that I could therefore reach the acute notes; so I too began to sing. I defined myself as an inn baritone, because I had a pitch in my voice and I could sing louder than others. But I do not perform in public, except for a rare sing along with some friends.*

His collection of records is made up of a thousand pieces, from baroque music to Verdi. Numerous are his conferences on classical music and composers.

Although a Canadian, because *he spent his life and career* in that land, he always remains *the old Italian, Triestine*, who was moved the day they called him Mister Italy.

When I go to Italy, for three or four weeks, it is so beautiful; I listen to the language because there are new words, new ways of saying things – some I reject because I find them to be strange... I don't like those new verbs in fashion which came about after I had left... but I listen in order to learn new words.

Not liking sports, he would not know who to cheer for, whether it be the Italians or Canadians, but put against the wall in order to choose, in a hypothetical music contest between the two countries, he confesses that he would cheer for Italy, even if – he highlights – he would prefer the best to win.

...and Montreal is reached

A new leg of this trot into the memory through Canada, is Montreal, a splendid city of Quebec. Founded by the French in 1642 on an island where the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa Rivers flow into each other, it is connected to solid ground by many bridges. Multiethnic and with a population of more than 3,500,000 inhabitants, it has two official languages: French and English. Anagramming the numbers of the years (1967 and 1976) - Montreal was the headquarters of two important events: International Expo in 1967 and the Olympic Games in 1976.

GILBERTO STRUCCHELLI

A time of mischief with friends, as boys playing in the streets... he recalls his childhood in Pola, where he was born in 1928 and where he had lived with his parents and brother in via Tartini 40. His father owned a drug store.

With the start of sirens and bombardments, in 1943, the family moved to a little house in Medolino. Returning to the city at the end of the war, finding the house destroyed by the bombs, they rented a dwelling place at Monte Paradiso. They stayed there until 1947, just before the signing of the Treaty of Paris, when they understood that all the protests in order to keep Pola Italian would have been vain. *We continued to hope, but we realized that everything was useless.*

They, therefore, loaded up all their belongings – almost taking apart their house and shop – on a railway carriage, with the support of the International Red Cross, which helped the refugees who were leaving, avoiding interferences by the Yugoslavian side. They went to Trento, where Nini Cerdonio, the father's cousin, was a Marshall of the Prison Guards. They more or less managed to settle down, by even opening up a drug store, *like those in Pola or Trieste* – Strucchelli specifies – *where bleach, wax, acids, paint, citrate and marshmallows were sold. At that time Italy was so and so: perhaps not so tragic as to die, but surely not enough to live.*

His father began to worry about the possible winds of war which seemed to blow between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union: he had already experienced imprisonment in Russia at the time of the First World War and did not want to find himself in the middle of possible new conflicts. In contact with a sister, in Canada already for a few years with her family, the father thought about joining her. After “a family council”

in the Strucchelli home's kitchen, they decided of emigrating beyond the ocean, even realizing that it would have been forever. They left at their own expense with a British ship – the IRO was instituted later on – from Le Havre, where they had found the possibility of an immediate embarkation. Amidst trunks and mattresses, Gilberto did not forget to take along his stamps collection, begun still when he was eight years old. They arrived at Quebec, where a Customs officer, struck by the father's knowledge of French, eased the control of the trunks. It was November of 1948. Inside the soles of his shoes a small treasure was hidden, about 600 dollars. *It would be nothing now, but back then it was a lot* – he highlights. The plan to manage to take the family savings out of Italy, had worked with the support of uncle Nini – the one from Trento – who had asked one of the prisoners to make a pair of custom made shoes. *He was a very good shoemaker. I was worried because I would have had to walk on wet snow, but everything worked out well: I recovered the money and threw away the shoes.*

Having reached Montreal, they managed to find a place to stay in sub-rent thanks to the help of a family met on board the ship. A varied succession of jobs followed: from construction to a fridge factory, from a marble and alabaster import company to Canadian Vickers, a subway train factory. Despite the work commitments, Gilberto managed to attend evening courses in order to finish his technical studies, which allowed him to land successfully a job in a company producing industrial machinery, where he worked for 25 years in charge of sales. *Hard were the times when I worked and studied. I had a hard time keeping my eyes open on the bus: more than once I missed my stop, due to the fatigue which made me sleep during the bus ride.*

Married to a girl originally from Treviso, with whom he had a daughter, he returned to Pola for the first time in 1986, while his parents no longer wanted to go back retracing their past. He now feels *seated on two chairs*: a spirit equally divided between Canada and Italy, which in a supposed sports competition between the two teams, he would opt for a tie.

He wanted to get to know the country that he moved to, by visiting it with a camper. Decided, in any case, to maintain the Italian language at home, he tells of the condition set out to his daughter, when at the age of eighteen she wanted to get her driver's licence: for over a year the girl had to speak to him in the family's language.

FULVIO ROTONDO

At Fiume, ever since I began to understand life, I only have good memories. It has remained in my mind ever since I was a young boy. Even today I can tell you

how many stops the street car of Scoglieto makes – where the gas factory and the municipal butchery were – up until the beaches of Borgo Marina. In my mind Fiume was better than French Cote d'Azure – he starts his story.

His was a life marked by adventure, but very much tied to Fiume, where he arrived in 1922, from Taranto where he was born six months before. His family, in fact, was from the Puglia Region of Italy and it would move after the father, a technician with the Civil Engineers. He was the seventh child, after him another four siblings were born in Fiume. Many were the transfers, searching for a sufficiently large place to stay in order to accomodate such a numerous family: from the area of the Public Park to Cento Celle in Val Scurigne, to Torretta. The opportunity arose to rent an apartment in a villa in via S. Entrata. The house, which belonged to a Hungarian, was uninhabited for sometime because it was known to be haunted. Dad Rotondo declared: if there are ghosts, where we are going, they will flee. Having taken possession of the chosen apartment, other tenants then followed their example.

Inclined to teaching, Fulvio registered at a teacher's college. The time of compulsory military service arrived and he was assigned to the infantry. *Can you imagine a native of Fiume in the infantry?* He saw a notice from the Italian Navy; so he left for La Spezia as volunteer radio-telegrapher, to his father's disappointment. After completing the training and having embarked, he experienced in person three sinkings. On leave in Fiume, he saw his neighbour - a childhood friend - Giuseppina. Between serious and witty remarks he asked her to marry him: and she accepted. They got married in 1943 and two weeks after the wedding, Fulvio was sent to Rhodes. He would have had to return to give his testimony at an inquiry, but the plans ended up clashing with the 8th September and its consequences. Taken prisoner by the Germans, for two and a half years the family members had no way of getting news about him. Taken to Germany departing from Greece, after an extenuating journey through Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, he was freed by the Americans on the 1st May, 1945. Still not having, however, any intention to enter into a camp, even temporary, with some companions of misadventure he decided to undertake the journey home on foot. He met good people in Friuli, at Poincicco. A lady, who had her husband and two sons in Russia, offered him hospitality and was able to communicate – via radio – his arrival in Italy: thanks to her help, Fulvio's wife was able to find out that her husband was safe and sound. She reached him, on foot from Fiume, where they returned together. Waiting for them was their little son, who until then had only known his father from a photograph.

Not agreeing to the new system, Fulvio requested to go to Italy. In consideration of his Italian origins, the family was given permission to leave. They left Fiume

aboard a truck, with a bit of furniture and a few other things which they were authorized to take away. *When we arrived at Basovizza I cried, because I understood that I would never return again* – is the moving memory. It was the 17th April, 1947. Considering his sailing experience, he headed to Genoa, where he found work in a shipyard. Even there ups and downs were not missing, like during the first two weeks stay in a crumbling hotel, where his wife actually got scabies. Amongst the various settlements of fortune which followed, was even a bombed house. In 1948, their second child was born. Fulvio became a commuter with Milan, where his other family members lived after they left Fiume – and where in the meantime he had begun to work as a pastry chef. He began to think about following the example of the brother of his father-in-law, who had migrated to Australia, with the support of the IRO. It took a few years to convince Giuseppina to leave. Accepted into the contingent which was about to leave for Canada, the Rotondos moved into the camp of Bagnoli, with a child convalescing from the burns, which he got when he spilt a pot of hot water onto himself. After the usual medical checkups and successive transfer to the by now famous camp of Bremenhaven in Germany, they waited for the embarkation. Fulvio left alone, with the qualification of a labourer. His wife and child had to wait for three months in order to reach him, because the necessary requirements were a fixed domicile in the new continent and a financial guarantee of at least 300 dollars.

Fulvio landed in Halifax: it was again the 1st of May, like the date in which the Americans had freed him from internment in Germany and, strangely coincidental, like the date in which he gave this present interview, 53 years after his arrival in Canada. Even for him it was not an easy beginning: he began as a lumberjack in the forest, but total inexperience hindered him and the earnings from the cords (piles of wood; see interview of Odoni of Hamilton) did not even allow him to cover the three and a half dollars he needed for board and lodging. After three months he decided to quit, together with his group. On foot they left the area to reach the town. *In order to manage to release ourselves from the contract, which bound us to the Company, we opened up our suitcases and began to sell our clothes* – he tells.

Having moved to Quebec, he improvised as a cook in a motel: without experience, he began to cook dishes which he remembered seeing prepared by his wife. It was a success, above all due to the innovation brought to the bizarre local gastronomic uses, one for all the pasta cooked once a week and then kept in vases, in the boiling water. Horrified, Fulvio threw out everything and cooked pasta and rice on the spot, which were very much appreciated. The salary agreed was 40 dollars a week.

Joined at this point by his wife and children, they had to move to Montreal, where better climatic conditions helped with Giuseppina's asthma problems. Having

adapted himself to the most disparate jobs – from construction worker to waiter, from cook to pastry chef – Fulvio, however, could not see great promises for the future. He decided to accept the offer to be rehired by the shipyard Company in Genoa, so they set aside the 600 dollars for the return tickets to Italy.

As often happens when you are at a crossroad, destiny plays some funny tricks: hired by a shipyard, my salary had increased from 35 to 60 dollars a week, until reaching 1,000 per month in 1963. I said to my wife: Ina, now you can spend all you want.

Canada began to keep its promises. Having purchased the house and having made some nice friendships, they decided to stay for good.

After a positive thirty year career, in his capacity as the person in charge of mechanical maintenance in one of the biggest International Chemical Companies, he continued his cooperation with the company in his capacity as a consultant: *in three years I managed to earn more than in the previous 40 years* – he highlights with pride.

His two children have given them deserved satisfaction to the sacrifices of the past years, when half of the salary went towards the tuition fees: one is an expert and sought after electro-mechanic, the other is the owner of a dental clinic.

Returning for the first time to Fiume in 1962, the visit was a bit of a disappointment for Fulvio and Ina: it no longer transmitted the sensations of years past. *The people had been the heart of the city, its folklore, and by now a great deal of that colour no longer existed.*

Grandparents of seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren, Canada became their new homeland, where Giuseppina, in 2004, ended her journey.

ALCEO DI BERT

In the postwar period, he practically saw the border materialize itself under his eyes, which divided the territory of Merna – at a distance of 5 kilometres from Gorizia – where he was born in 1932.

Parents, grandparents, 5 children, were the identikit of his family. *We lived right next to the church, my grandparents had an inn with a wine depot, not too far from the Vipacco, a river that had a great role in my life: I would go there barefooted, almost everyday, with my fishing rods. Dad, a native of Gradisca, was an aviation officer at the nearby airport. Ever since we were children, we spoke two languages: Italian with dad and Slovenian with mom and my grandparents.*

Unfortunately, there are even the memories of the war. He was playing in the courtyard at home when he heard a pistol shot, which later he found out it was fired by two *strangers* at one of the young German officers, then stationed in the town. As a result of the deadly ambush, on the following day the Germans had everybody come out of their homes, with the threat of heavy reprisals if those responsible were not found. Alceo then was in the fifth year of elementary school and he remembers his amazement upon returning home from school, in seeing the entire crowd out in the street. He even remembers his mother who from afar yelled out at him to go to his uncle in Gorizia and the comforting welcome of the family member. It seems to him that the Bishop of Gorizia had intervened personally to heal the dramatic situation in Merna. The episode ended with a few deportations to Germany and the order to disperse for the inhabitants: soon the place became a ghost town, with grass that grew tall in the middle of the street. The Di Berts moved to Gradisca, where at the end of the war they found themselves as refugees, while his grandmother wanted to return to her house, which, at that point, had remained beyond the border. She lost her inn, which was confiscated. Alceo, after middle school in Gradisca, registered at the Volta Institute in Trieste, where he would go everyday by train: *how much I ran in order not to miss it! And then I remember the checkpoint close to Monfalcone: you had to have an identity card with you in order to be able to go on* – is his story. In the meantime, his family members had made an application to emigrate with the support of the IRO. The answer arrived when young Di Bert was attending the fourth year of secondary school: only he and his older sister were allowed to leave for Canada. Later on, they were able to recall the rest of the family. It was 1951. The boy didn't know much about the country beyond the ocean, however during the school period, he had been struck by a big poster in the atrium of the railway station, which publicized Canada: *a promontory, a large lake, immense forests... a spectacular view. One day I will go to visit those places* – was the thought back then, ignoring what turn his life would take.

The moment of the departure arrived. In the trunk he wanted to put even his schoolbooks: *who knows, perhaps they will be of use...* then Bagnoli and the usual stop at Bremenhaven. In the camp, at every boarding the loudspeakers would transmit a melody entitled “it is the time to depart”. They climbed aboard the ship “Goya” – a 27,000 tonne ship, forced after a few days of navigation to return to port, in order to repair the fridges which had broken down. The damage, however, had been done and the food stock had gone bad. This, however, was not replaced and during the crossing, spoiled food continued to be served. Alceo only ate fruit.

In Halifax, there was the selection: Alceo was chosen to go to work on the railways in Ontario, his sister went to Montreal, to a centre for the deaf and dumb.

A trip began for him in which everything was being discovered: amongst the first things, the very old coins still in circulation, with the head of the father of King George. They settled in the middle of the night at the place of destination, Nakina. Having got off the train, he found out that the carriages positioned on the other track, were the accommodation for the workers assigned for the maintenance of that railway line.

The place was lost in the middle of the forest: in order to reach the area where they had to work, they moved along the railways with trolleys, careful to the railway schedule, in order not to be run over by trains. It was October, but the temperature was still mild; the air in the forests was pleasant. In the team, there was even a young Romanian– who had learnt Italian in the refugee camps of our country – in love with Pirandello. He became an appreciated narrator of the works of this author for his colleagues, during the ride on the trolleys to the jobsites.

With the arrival of winter, Alceo was relieved from the bonds of his work contract. He left together with Claudio Boselli, his workmate and the son of a colleague of his sister, to Montreal.



Immigrants were often assigned to teams, which worked on the railway line for modernization and maintenance jobs (from Sergio Gottardi's album)

They reached the city. After a first logistical settling at a nursing home for the priests and the recruitment as an occasional snow remover, the young man was a boarder with a family of Calabrian origin. Job after job, he managed to insert himself into the new reality and even to create for himself a sociable group of friends – many from his native land – with whom to share the moments of free time. A fine moment arrived when, together with his sister, he was able to recall the family members. Grandmother included. His father, for a few years, dedicated himself to rearing chinchillas.

Despite his employment commitment, Alceo managed to attend an evening course in order to specialize as a designer, which allowed him to end up in an important company – a producer amongst other things of motors for Rolls-Royce Aviation – for which he worked for over 30 years.

Married to a girl originally from Messina, they had two children: a son – who graduated as an accountant – was hired by the same company that Alceo worked for and a daughter, who is a fashion designer for children's clothes.

Returning on many occasions to Gorizia, Gradisca and Merna, after some years he saw the places of his youth again, which made him understand that it is not the places that have changed, but the people.

He feels Canadian, but he taught Italian to his children, as well as to his grandson.

ALVISE GASPARINI

Born in Zara on the 24th May, 1921, he lived in calle Paravia, close to the church of Our Lady of Health. Life very soon was difficult for him, because he lost his mother right after his birth. Welcomed by the family of his paternal uncle, he grew up separated from his brother, raised by another couple of uncles. He was a very lively child, not liking school too much, something which he now regrets. His attachment to the navy is probably the result of his rescue by a sailor, when, as a small child at around the age of seven he was distracted by the airplanes that were flying over the city, and fell into the water, not knowing how to swim. He had a lot of friends, *naughty, naughty boys from Zara* – he gets excited remembering that time. *And then we would sing. No gavemo quatro soldi, perché zigari fumemo, anche i morti remenemo a chi fogo no ne da. Semo muli sì xe vero, co le scarpe taconade, ma co demo una fumada, la miseria in fumo va* (a happy song sung by boys who although they had no money, smoked cigars to get their misery go up in smoke) – he sings with enthusiasm the song of his childhood years.

Having left school, he went to work as a marble carver together with his father. Having made a request in order to be registered in the conscription lists of the Navy, from 1941 onwards he found himself experiencing in the flesh the turns and implications of the war, by operating in the communications sector: from Venice to Taranto, from Cassino to the Gothic Line. He saw Zara once again on the occasion of a few brief home-leaves, without ever imagining that he would never go back to live there. The postwar period, in fact, found him a refugee in the refugee camp of Lecce, from where he moved to Gaeta. In order to make ends meet, he worked at various trades: porter, carpenter, mattress maker for 500 Italian liras a day plus room. Joined by his father in 1948 and having moved to the refugee camp in Brescia, in 1951 he decided to go to Canada through IRO. That was the country which he was fond of, because of his experience fighting with the Canadian army. He arrived there on the 5th December, 1951, aboard the ship “Anna Salen”, which he had boarded at Bremenhaven. *Everybody had the American dream, but having arrived within the vicinities of Halifax, it was a completely different panorama the one that I surprisingly discovered.*

Taken to Montreal in a camp for DP (displaced persons), he found out about the great unemployment crisis in Canada. He had to be patient. In the camp he read a bulletin about some employment possibilities in Winnipeg, so he moved 600 kilometres to the West. Another camp, but no work, until three weeks later he was hired as a labourer for the construction of new railway lines: *10 hours of work a day, no overtime nor breaks. Living in wagons, warmed up by woodstoves. I was the only Italian out of 200 workers* –are his words. He managed to save one thousand dollars, which allowed him to return to Montreal. Settled into a boarding house and upon the recommendation of various friends, various jobs followed, until he found a permanent job at the General Food Company, a big American food company, where with satisfaction he worked for 28 years, loved and appreciated by his colleagues and bosses.

Returning twice to Zara, during a holiday in Friuli – the region which, at the end of the interview, we discovered to be the land of origin of his grandfather – he met the girl who became his wife and who gave him a daughter.

After over 50 years in Canada, he continues to feel Italian in his heart and in his blood: *my regiment sacrificed 481 dead for the liberation of Italy* – he highlights, still moving himself. He, nevertheless, is thankful to Canada for his journey of life, making it clear, in any case, that *our people contributed quite a lot to the aims achieved by this country.*

BENITO PESUT BALDUCCI

In Zara, we lived in via Roma and attended the Cippico school, with teacher Lunazzi – a good teacher – is his memory. After class, we would go to the cafeteria and then on Riva Nuova... with the beautiful sea, celestial; then I would go to my adored grandfather Perich, who had an inn and who would give me something more to eat... a carefree life, every now and then a dive into the sea... And so...

The fury of the war had still not come crashing down in the most brutal manner upon Zara – where he was born in 1933 – when his family crossed the Adriatic Sea, moving to Ravenna, the birthplace of the Balducci father. The man, who in the Dalmatian city had worked for the Ravennate Bricklayers Cooperative, was the second husband of his mother, who was widowed right after Benito's birth. From the marriage another brother and a sister were born.

They even had to move from the new residence, struck by the wartime events, in the direction of Fusignano, which, however, close to the front of the Gothic Line, turned out to be anything other than a refuge from the war. Displaced, they found hospitality in the countryside, with some farmers, where they remained until the end of the war.

Even if the reconstruction work in the postwar period gave a few prospects for the Balducci Company, the family hypothesized a more fruitful future in the United States, where a maternal uncle owned a hotel. With the emigration contingents closed to that country, the choice fell upon Canada, where they were accepted in their capacity as farmers, for the sugar beet harvest. It was 1951. After the usual stopovers in Bagnoli and Bremenhaven, together with another thirty families from the hometowns, they arrived in Montreal with a Constellation four-engine airplane. Working in some farms – not too bad – due to the incompatibility with the encounter, or rather the clash, with different culinary customs, in some way they ended up suffering from hunger: *one Sunday I welcomed enthusiastically the idea of chicken promised for lunch. Yes, I found the chicken on the table, but cooked in milk!!!!*

That first experience, in any case, allowed for the setting aside of 1,000 dollars a month, a quite considerable amount of money in those days. *It was everybody's sacrifice: even the youngest children worked in the fields.*

Finding a house was quite a daunting task, because there was not much choice. *Thank God we found one, but in the kitchen and in the dining room the floors were actually missing. We got them.*

Life on the new continent continued to leave Benito doubtful: *but where have you brought me?* – was the reflection with which he would turn to his parents. Life

seemed a bit oldfashioned and restrictive to him, starting with the way of dressing, very far from the one which they were used to. People would work and then go home. Perhaps there were some sporadic nights at the movies. Especially in the northern area of the city, Italians could not go to bars, because they would end up getting arrested: a law was actually in force which forbade groups of more than four people to stop in public areas. Our fellow countrymen, who when they met were always in a big group, in the end they always found themselves spending the night in a prison cell.

After a few years, they began to settle in. *Because otherwise one would go crazy* – he adds smilingly.

Having bought a house, Benito found a satisfying job with a chain of women's clothes stores. As he was promoted to a buyer, when the company started to import Italian products, he frequently made trips to Florence to purchase accessories. His working career then lasted uninterruptedly until 1992.

Successively, he dedicated himself to his greatest passion of always: singing. He had studied it for many years in Italy, before his departure for Canada... *and then everything went up in smoke*. With a deep bass voice, he was not able to continue studying as a soloist, because at the time, his parents did not like music that much. A member of an Italian choir with a classical repertoire of mountain songs, he is



The sugar beets harvest. The hard work in the fields would involve the whole family (from the album of the Morgan family)

even a member of the choir of the University of Montreal: a group of 250 singers accompanied by a symphonic orchestra, which even performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City. *I get goose pimples from the emotion of performing on the same stage where Beniamino Gigli sang* – he confesses.

I can't say anything else other than I am happy – is his conclusion, in drawing a balance of his own life. *I would not go back at all*. His family members instead did: in 1964 they returned to Italy. He has frequent telephone contacts with them and Benito pays them a visit almost every year.

He met his wife in Canada, originally from Caserta, with whom he had two daughters and a son, who is co-owner of successful restaurants with the son of Luciano Lecas, a native of Trieste who emigrated fifty years ago, whom we will meet in the following pages. Everyone of them speaks Italian.

He returned to Zara a couple of times. The last visit – it seems to him as if Tito was still there – left him with a bit of a bitter aftertaste, due to the unpleasant encounter with a border official, who blocked him on the ferryboat upon the arrival and bothered him with recriminations about his departure long time ago. *When I was 9 years old* – he observes. The intervention of a cousin of his residing in the city, put an end to the incident.

He practically defines himself of international nationality: *I regret criticisms of Canada, just as I get moved by Dalmatian or Italian songs*. It even happens while he tells it.

DOLORES MANGANELLI PASINATO

Directing her thought to Zara, where she was born in 1936, her memory becomes a fast flowing torrent. *They are very beautiful memories* – is her introduction. *At first we lived in via Larga, in front of the furniture store of my grandfather Arnaldo, who would spoil me a lot. At the end of the street there was the church of Saint Simon, where I was baptized and where my mother would take me for the evening benediction. We moved then to the area of Barcagno, on the edge of the sea, in a villa in the middle of the park: a real Eden*.

Orphaned by her father even before her birth, in that beautiful home Dolores lived together with her mother – a native of Pola – her grandfather and with what she herself defines as a tribe of uncles and aunts. They even owned the Santa Maria, a beautiful boat, a meeting point amongst friends and relatives and an occasion for happy carefree hours. *I liked living at Barcagno a lot, and also because Zara could*

be reached by steamship: at every crossing, I had the sensation of embarking myself on a small adventure...

She left Zara at the beginning of 1943, together with her mother and grandfather Manganelli, to go to a place close to Ancona, where the family had a small holiday home, with a small estate, used for crop sharing. Not too long after, the place became a refuge for many relatives, displaced after the deadly bombings which hammered and destroyed Zara, in November of that year. For Dolores, the memory of those events is still today an open wound, connected to a dramatic image of her mother, bent over the sewing machine. Seeing the back of her, she a small girl interpreted the shrugging of her shoulders as if she was laughing and asked her the reason for it. She saw her mother's eyes filled with tears: five family members had been killed in the bomb shelter, where they had sought refuge, hit by the aerial raids. As an irony of fate, the house from which they had fled had been spared. It was a difficult ordeal even for her grandfather, which remained with him for the remaining few years of his life. The detachment from Zara became final. The young girl continued her schooling until the second year of teacher's college.

Her mother remarried with her husband's brother and another two girls were born. An aviator before, in the postwar period he adapted himself to all kinds of trades: from a coal merchant to a furniture and people mover, survivors of the wartime events and roaming around in search of a place to stay. The future, which seemed to be grey, led him to believe that his family had to cross the Atlantic Ocean. In 1949, they entered the refugee camp of Cinecittà, followed by Barletta, Aversa, Bagnoli from where the man left. Dolores, her mother and sisters, were sent to wait for the embarkation at Bremenhaven. From the comfortable life of Zara to the areas set up for the refugees awaiting to emigrate: it was quite a considerable change. *Thank God, like all of the children of that age, I did not fully understand the reality. It was, in any case, ugly. It was not possible to have a bit of privacy: the blankets hanging on the cords acted as a partition amongst the various family nuclei. To our regret, at times we would end up being involuntary auditory witnesses of some disputes that were heated up more than usual in the neighbouring sectors* – she continues.

Particularly heavy was the stay in Germany: *there we suffered from hunger. During the first two months, I lost about 10-15 kilograms. In the morning, they would give us a slice of dark bread: inside there was a bit of everything, including the wings of flies* – he jokes, but not much else. *They would then add a spoonful of a kind of sour puina (ricotta cheese) with two green peppers. Who could have ever managed to swallow that stuff? To complete it all, when we would go out, we would bump into a huge nurse, who with daily regularity would force us to swallow a spoonful of cod*

liver oil. Having moved from the obligatory work of cleaning the corridors to kitchen cleaning, Dolores managed to get some bananas or carrots, to be shared with her younger sisters. After nine months of that life, in August of 1951 they left with the ship Anna Salen heading towards Canada: there were about 400 women and children on board. They arrived in Halifax, exhausted from the seasickness they had to put up with. The recurrent shock was not missing, upon the purchase of bread. The dismay then continued until evening fell, when an employee onboard the train, which was taking them to Montreal, began to light up some oil lamps one by one, to light up the compartment. Taken up by the discomfort, Dolores hugged her mother, asking her where they had ended up. Once having arrived at the destination, they found their father welcoming them. *At that time I was 15 years old, the age in which adolescent girls began to dream about knights in shining armour. I will not hide that I instead was dreaming about a nice roasted chicken to devour* – she continues. Imaginable, therefore, was her joy, when she discovered that as a welcoming meal that was the actual dish her father had prepared.

The first dwelling place was a modestly furnished apartment, with used furniture and the bare necessities in terms of utensils. Her father, in fact, could not count upon financial resources, on the contrary: as already told in previous cases, he too had to face the trade of a lumberjack. Due to his absolute inexperience, not only he earned nothing, but he had to borrow money to pay for his board and lodging. So he started



Regardless of one's own profession, one was allowed to immigrate only if he accepted to be a manual worker (from the album of Sergio Gottardi)

working as a ragman, his wife took on two boarders, Dolores went to work in a canning factory: *helping myself with two long pliers I had to put the stuffed olives inside some small vases* – she explains.

Better times came, when her father was finally hired, as a mechanical engineer in a company which was producing airplane motors. The young Manganelli was able to resume her studies, by completing secondary school and making it to business college. After a brief working period and having married a young man originally from Padova, she soon became a mother.

The cold periods do not occupy a lot of room in her memory, *perhaps because as a young girl one pays less attention to the cold* – she explains smilingly. *Now I can't stand it all that much. As soon as I arrived I would challenge the rigid temperatures, by wearing a very light coat given to me by the IRO. I would put a belt around it in order to make it stay closed* – she tells.

Dad Manganelli's body has been resting on Canadian soil for quite sometime, while her mother, at the moment of the interview, was about to celebrate her ninety-second birthday.

On a few occasions Dolores has returned to Pola, but she did not have the courage to go to Zara: just at the thought of it her voice cracks. She has, however, seen it again in the videos taken by some family members, on holidays in those places.

She has three children, who have finished secondary school and work in the computer sector. They all speak Italian, but with a particularity: they address their mother in English, their father in Italian. Even her two grandchildren have learnt Italian well.

Drawing the conclusion to these last 50 years, Dolores makes a positive balance of her life. And she considers herself to be Canadian: though loving Italy, her home is found on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

ENEO IANORA

His mother was from Fiume and his father – a customs officer – from the Neapolitan province: the origin of his story began in Fiume on the 15th June, 1924. They lived in via Santa Entrata 156, in a small two-storeyed house, which had always belonged to the family of his mother and which still exists.

The most instinctive memory connects him to the pilgrimages with his grandmother to the shrine of Sussak. *...and then the elementary school years in Torretta, Miss Bacchi – the teacher...* With the outbreak of the war, because his work at a Fiumian mineral oil refinery, considered to be an auxiliary establishment of war, he

was exonerated from military conscription. Although he had begun to work at the age of sixteen, he was able to finish his studies in accountancy as a private student, and then he registered at the university in Trieste.

After the signing of the armistice, though not being a hothead, but actually an introverted and rather timid boy, almost by a kind of behavioural coherence I adhered to the Republic of Salò. He found out about the end of the war in Novara, from his father and sister, then seventeen years old – in the meantime displaced with the rest of the family in Varese – who had caught up with him in order to take him home. Captured by a partisan group while they were pedaling home, they were thrown into prison at Arona for 18 days. For many other detainees, arrested amongst the people of the place in the immediately following days, there were even some summary executions. The three Ianoras – practically unknown to their jailers – managed to live out their jail term in quite an anonymous way, until the mother got them freed through some right acquaintances. The family thus reunited moved to the refugee camp of Bologna: military barracks in those days still occupied by the British, in via Panzacchi. Settling in dormitories – men on one side, women on the other – they ate canned food for a year and a half.

The father resumed his work in the public services, asking as a destination the southern part of the country, politically less hotter: they moved to Salerno. It was 1947. Eneo began to work for the UNRRA House, which looked after the reconstruction. In 1950, however, the section which he worked in was closed down. The job opportunities were certainly not rosy and talk began about emigration through the IRO. Before leaving he got married to Maria, a girl of the place, and together they moved towards the camp of Lesum, at Bremenhaven. With them was even Eneo's brother, who still resides in Canada. They crossed the Ocean aboard the ship *General Sturgis*, a troops transport ship, which arrived in Halifax on the 12th September, 1951. During the trip, the scholastic knowledge of English on the part of the wife, had her promoted to the position of interpreter.

The first settlement was in Montreal in the camp of St. Paul l'Ermite; later the young couple went to work for a family as domestic helpers. After three months, in order to break their contract, Maria declared herself pregnant. Eneo went to work as a waiter in a big hotel and his wife stayed at home, doing sewing work. In 1953, the firstborn girl was born, followed by another little sister in 1960.

Homesick, and with a possibility of being employed at a Credit Institute, in 1956 they tried in vain to reinsert themselves back in Italy. The potential job vanished, in fact, into thin air, due to a series of internal problems which shook the bank. Before returning to Canada, Eneo managed to graduate from the University of Naples.

Once again beyond the ocean, he began to work in the administration of a big construction company and then landed at the Olivetti Company, which was triumphantly inserting itself into the American and Canadian economy. A cooperation which lasted thirty years.

Now a daughter of his lives in Italy, the other one has made him a grandfather three times. Three were also the visits to Fiume, continuing to feel a lot of homesickness for his roots, so much so that *I would have gone back on foot* – he confesses.

The first fifty years are the worst – he smiles, looking at his life as an emigrant – *and after they have gone by, perhaps the heart is still in suspense. Emigrating at the age of twenty leaves too many open bridges with the past: even conquering a certain serenity, one never manages to entirely forget the road travelled along in order to reach it.*

LORENZO LEBAN

Born in Gorizia in October of 1939, he has some quite vague memories of his city of origin, so much so that at his first return, at around the age of twenty-five, he had a hard time finding his way. Amongst the urban points that he manages to visualize, is the climb which leads to the castle. Inside, in the old city, there is his grandfather's house, where Lorenzo was born and where the family was displaced during the war. As often happens in childhood memories, the image of the street kept in the memory was very wide: seeing it once again instead, he found himself facing the real dimensions of the street, much more reduced.

Practically empty is his memorial archive of the period of the war, considering his childhood age back then; he remembers only the evacuation upon the explosion of a mine which happened in the internal courtyard, at the time in which the partisans had taken possession of those spaces, where the horses grazed.

His father's family was a dynasty of silversmiths and Lorenzo remembers very well the appeal that the laboratory impressed him, with its old machinery. He would often go there with a passion *in order to put my hands where they weren't supposed to be put* – he smiles.

The decision to leave during the postwar period, was taken without much knowledge of what the future could bring. Of course it was the fruit of long – even heated – discussions between his parents. Argentina was the first choice, but it was not available because the quota of immigrants was already filled. As an alternative, his father chose Canada, upon the advice of a friend, employed at the Emigration Office.

They consulted the atlas and in the end the man left with the qualification of a farmer. The family members joined him the following year. During the period preceding the trip, in consideration of the locality of destination, Lorenzo was made to study a bit of French. Whilst waiting for the departure he was in conflict with himself, debating between the great regret of having to separate himself from his maternal grandfather and the desire to be able to re-embrace his father. His mother sold off a greater part of their belongings, but she saved the Youngsters' Encyclopaedia into the luggage.

The big day arrived. It was 1951. From Gorizia they headed towards Venice, and via Milan reached Genoa: the mother, Lorenzo and his three brothers. He was gasping for air when he found himself in front of the ship that they were about to board: *I didn't think that it was possible to make such a big thing in metal*. A strong emotion, however he can't remember whether the ship was Vulcania or Saturnia. On board they were settled into a dormitory, to be shared with about forty women and children. But Lorenzo was interested in discovering that floating world, entirely new to him: he even managed to enter into the engine room, an area that was strictly forbidden to unauthorized personnel. He was fascinated by the waves that ploughed through, by the foaming trail that followed them, by the expanse of water that surrounded them. A particular emotion was the moment in which from the parapet he was able to admire the Azores: *they were small islands. How was it possible that someone could live on them, without falling into the water?* – he asked himself.

Actually avoiding two storms, they arrived in Halifax. Even before docking, a single thought fluttered around little Lorenzo's mind: snow. In Gorizia, in fact, it would never snow and his father had told him in his letters that in Canada it often and copiously snowed. It was November and it had still not snowed there.

They climbed aboard the train: *compartments that at least dated back to the 1920s, a coal-fired locomotive, old fashioned in comparison to Italy* – is Leban's story.

There were many things which aroused his curiosity, pushing him to explore the train. He met a young Italian-Canadian girl, from whom he received the first pieces of information about the country which was about to host him.

They finally arrived in Montreal and he was able to re-embrace his father, for whom he had a lot of affection and with whom he shared the common passion for the goldsmith art. The apartment which they would have settled in was quite big, but it had to be shared with other families. This was not the only thing which surprised Lorenzo: what also intrigued him was the discovery that the milkman would make home deliveries with a cart drawn by horses, ready to stop at the whistle of the driver.

His father was hired in a company which made artistic pieces for churches, thus managing to adequately place himself in his professional branch. The initial jobs remained behind them: first a farmer then a lumberjack. Lorenzo was able to resume his studies, even if due to a hitch, not all that much involuntary on the part of the person who led him, he was sent to an English-speaking school instead of a French-speaking one, as his linguistic preparation would have wanted. *There had always been a certain rivalry between the English and French groups in Quebec, even if they settled things with the so-called Quiet Revolution* – he winks. Notwithstanding the English language to be entirely learnt, an added value in his scholastic career however remained the previous cultural formation in Italian school, quite superior to the one of the classes which they sent him to attend. He completed his studies with evening courses, because wanting to contribute towards the upkeep of the family, he started working at a frame maker's shops. Hired by Henry Birks & Sons, prestigious Canadian jewellers, he managed in the end to take the long awaited step, starting a business of his own. Having retired for a few years now, he was even a consultant for the Royal Mint.

Another great passion and goal reached was the acquisition of a beautiful boat, aboard which he spends his time whenever he can.



The puffing steam train with which – after the landing in Halifax and a hallucinating three-day trip – the immigrants would reach the localities which they had been assigned to. Old and battered, it is generally compared in the memory to a livestock wagon

MARIA SOFONIO OSCARI

A person who did not experience it, cannot imagine what it had been like. Mrs. Maria has no memories of her friends, but she remembers the bombardments which from the 2nd November, 1943 shook Zara, where she was born in 1926. Her father was a butcher, there were nine in the family – the parents and seven children – they lived in calle Tintori. Up until the outbreak of the war, their existence was peaceful. Having completed the three junior commercial school, she thought about becoming a clerk.

With the second bombardment on the 26th November, their house was destroyed. Luckily the whole family was outside. They looked for each other running in an apocalyptic scenario, with dumbfounded people adrift, who wandered in the midst of poor corpses torn to pieces and body parts hurled onto the trees. In the end they all found themselves safe and sound, in the vicinities of the cemetery. They dispersed across the Yugoslavian border, towards the countryside where they had relatives. They had only their clothes on. One night after a week, they were the object of a brutal on-the-spot investigation by the partisan groups, decidedly fierce against Italy. Having checked that the names of Maria and of her family members did not appear on the banishment lists of their black book, the check ended in a painless manner. Returning to Zara, they received news that they could live for Trieste on the steamship Sansego which, incidentally, sank on the return trip. It was Easter of 1944. Being smitten with hunger, they decided to leave. At first, her father put up a bit of resistance, but in the end he too boarded the ship. The basic necessity in the baggage which they could have taken with them. They would never return to Zara.

They were first housed in Trieste in a centre in a converted school in Gretta; later in the postwar period, the family was transferred to an apartment in Castiglione delle Stiviere. It, however, was not easy to make ends meet: the IRO would give a monthly contribution of 1,000 Italian liras per person, not sufficient to cover the expenses of board and lodging. In order to survive, they invented a commercial activity, with rather adventurous implications: with bicycles borrowed from the people of the place, Maria and a sister of hers would go to Vicenza to buy contraband tobacco, with which they made cigarettes to resell. It happened that on a Sunday, returning with their supplies, they were stopped by an inspection patrol, who discovered their load. However they managed to soften up the guards. Released – each one with her own sack of 25 kilograms of merchandise – they were caught up in a storm along the return way: they found refuge with a kind lady, who even provided them with some refreshment. They later discovered that she was the wife of the officer who

had stopped them. Their brother was not so lucky: having gone to Dalmatia to buy tobacco from Macedonia, he was intercepted by the partisans and held in prison until the end of the war.

In 1947, Maria and her older sister began to work in Switzerland: *I would give the whole pay cheque to my family* – she makes clear. The economic situation continued being difficult; in order to be able to study, two of her brothers were sent to a Seminary close to Milan.

They saw in Canada a possible solution and made the decision to emigrate through the IRO. All nine of them left, from Germany. After a 26 hour flight they arrived in Dorval. It was June of 1951. Having been sent to the sugar beet fields, they found themselves entirely unprepared for that kind of work. Released from the contract with the help of a priest, they moved into a small apartment on the outskirts of Montreal. They looked for work: someone in a factory, another in the hospital. 35 cents an hour was the average wage. The boys, in order to be able to go to university during the day, worked at night. *We began, by tightening the belt. It was a commitment, because if you did not work you could not get social assistance; if you got sick your medical expenses would not be paid for. It was not the same as today.*

Through a lot of sacrifices, bit by bit, their life style improved: Maria assumed a role of responsibility in a big linen store, a sister of hers found a job with the Italian Shipping Company Line, two of her brothers became well-known printers.

Having married in 1953 with a native of Pola, a metalworker mechanic, Maria became a mother twice. She recalls how at the time of her wedding there was not enough accommodation for the multitude of emigrants in constant arrival: and in fact, for a while even the newlyweds had to manage the best they could, settling into the apartment of her family.

After 52 years in Canada, she draws a positive retrospection of her experience. She returned only once to Zara, but she was disappointed by what she saw: *it is an ancient city, in total contrast with the concrete jungle built in it.*

Despite the fact that they had always spoken Italian at home (even her daughters and her two grandchildren speak Italian), in order to be able to give an answer with regards to her identity, perhaps she feels more Canadian today: *on the present passport it is stated that I was born in Zara – Croatia, ex Yugoslavia. And yet I went to Italian schools, I was born under Italy. The same thing goes for my husband, who saw his request to be assigned a military pension rejected, insofar as he was not Italian. He was in the war for 9 years and was a prisoner. Wasn't he Italian? I have lived for 52 with this dilemma.*

ANGELO AND GIULIANA PIVETTA

A graceful building, the trees along the entrance lane which greet you in the changing seasons, the backyard garden which reminds you the notes and lyrics of the song *Casetta in Canada*: not even the pond is missing with goldfish and lilac flowers. Good taste, artistic talent and computer capacity live together here. And a warm spirit of hospitality.

In the home of Angelo Pivetta and his wife Giuliana Steffè – President of the Istrian, Julian-Dalmatian Association of Families of Montreal – the author experienced that spirit of hospitality, a basic support for the realization of the interviews in Montreal.

Angelo is a native of Pola by adoption, originally coming from Oderzo, in the province of Treviso, where he was born in 1932. The family's move to Pola was encouraged by the many friendships of his father – who was a tailor by trade – due to the job possibilities which the city offered. And in the Istrian city, where they arrived in 1938, they lived well, until the father's call to the army reserves, in 1942. Mother Pivetta awaited his return in the province of Treviso, where Angelo resumed his interrupted studies, by attending the Brandolini College: *destroyed by a bombardment, we had to move into a cottage outside Oderzo. I remember that one morning, on the way to school, I had to jump into a ditch in order to protect myself from a spray of bullets from Pippo, as the British reconnaissance airplane was popularly called.* In the postwar period, they all returned to Pola, to which his father was deeply attached and where the man resumed his work. At that time Rita, was born: she is practically the authentic native of Pola in the family. The hopes of normality collapsed with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which sanctioned the definitive loss of Pola: the Pivettas found themselves in the column of exiles who were leaving. *I remember as if it was now the household furnishings of the poor people, on the pier of Pola, covered with some canvas, the pouring rain, an entire crowd awaiting the ships. We instead sent our furniture to Oderzo by train. Dad was in despair.*

They arrived in Trieste on a day in which *the bora* wind was blowing: *there was ice along the shores and they even hung out ropes for the pedestrians to hold themselves* – he recalls. After a brief stay at the silos, hoping to manage to get back on their feet, they reached their land of origin, in the Veneto region. *Our family members were able to give us accomodation in a room, but nothing more. We had to rebuild our lives. We even had to face local supporters of Tito's ideologies, who interfered so that a flat in a public housing would not be assigned to us* – he continues. For two years they lived in a school, where on the floor above were the elementary

classrooms. In order to be able to survive, they sold their furniture which they had brought with them from Pola.

The unemployment crisis pushed Angelo and his father to Torino, where it seemed to be easier to get accomodation in public housing assigned to refugees, who worked for FIAT or CEAT. Angelo found work in a printing press – assigned to the washing of the rolls; his father in a tailor shop. They ended up in the little barracks of San Paolo, crowded with refugees. They went on for a few years, separated from the rest of the family which stayed behind in Oderzo and in an atmosphere of great economic uncertainty. The prospects campaigned by American and Canadian functionaries, on a visit to the camp in order to recruit manpower for their countries, were therefore listened to with interest. The Pivettas answered their call: having gathered together at Bagnoli, where they were subjected to the foreseen health checkups, they were then sent to Lesum, the waiting camp of Bremen, from whose port they boarded the ship “Anna Salen” towards Canada. It was November of 1951. *The ship was more suitable for the transportation of livestock than humans – Angelo recalls. Friendships were fostered on board however with people from our lands, which have lasted until today.* In consideration of the conditions of the sea and of the relative consequences on the passengers’ stomach, the distribution of tea was generous. Lemons were asked for in order to mitigate the indisposition, receiving however a negative response. Upon their arrival they then discovered that the hold was full of crates of citrus fruit. The passengers could not do anything but to hold back their anger. *I remember the witty remarks of Nereo Lorenzi – a native of Fiume – who, in order to exorcise the situation a bit and lift up the morale, with a megaphone invited the men to shave before landing, in order to make a good impression once they had landed on the ground. In Halifax, I looked around and surely did not see the dollars which they said grew on trees – the story continues.*

Once aboard the train they had to fight against the sudden changes in the temperature of the heating: either one froze or one died from the cold; if the windows were opened, the faces would become black from the locomotive’s smoke. They arrived in Montreal, with a lot of cold and a lot of snow, without knowing where they were: the accommodations were at St. Paul l’Eremit. *It was necessary to find work, but how could a person move around in the middle of winter? Nobody told us that we had to have heavy jackets, boots...*

I began to work as a dishwasher in a cafeteria of a clothing factory. There were more plates that I broke than those I washed. I then moved onto the ironing sector, where I remained for two years. Through acquaintances, Angelo managed to land in a big printing establishment, which looked after advertisement printing: he started

from the bottom, but later he became the production director, a cooperation which lasted 39 years.

Having always had a passion for painting, he got himself involved in that artistic sector, setting up exhibits and obtaining gratifying results.

Completing the Canadian framework, his encounter with Giuliana, who in Montreal would casually see again mother Pivetta, whom had previously met at Lesum waiting to board. It was October of 1952 and for the youngsters it was a bolt of lightning.

Giuliana Steffè was still very young when with her parents she left Santa Domenica di Albona – where she was born in 1935 – for Canfanaro: they had moved there because of the father's job, a driver of the trucks that would go back and forth from Arsia, transporting bauxite. In the town, the family got bigger with the birth of another two girls.

Going over a past which is now rather remote, very many vivid flashes appears in her mind. Moments often inadequate, due to their dramatic nature, for the life of a girl: her father put against the wall by the Germans and saved thanks to the intervention of a priest; his father still hidden in the attic, while in their kitchen a German soldier, picking up a coffee for his commander, admired the Arian aspect of Giuliana's little blonde sister. Not to mention the failed attack on a group of Germans on the part of the partisans, and the consequent reprisal. After the summary execution of the people responsible for the ambush, the town was made to evacuate and many houses were burnt: *I remember the moos of the cows fleeing from the stables; ...and then the image of two dolls resting upon the windowsill of a window, while the room around was going up in flames. They made us climb onto the trucks used to carry the bauxite; an old sick man was picked up and tossed onto it like a sack. They took us to Pola, it seems to me to the temple of Augustus, and we remained there sleeping on the hay, receiving watery soup as food, with a few pieces of vegetable marrow and a few grains of rice in it.*

She still remembers how during the days following the armistice, everybody went to the abandoned barracks of Pola and supplied themselves with the silver utensils and even the *fez* – used to make slippers. They took also the mattresses, from which the wool would be pulled out, carded even by the youngest, at her aunt's home. *She would put a little pile of wool on the ground in front of us, telling us: if you've pulled out the knots by evening you will get supper; otherwise nothing. I even remember my father who was an improvised mattress maker, sewing with a long needle.*

In the chronology of memories, the following stage saw them at Capodistria, where in the postwar period the father began to work at the vegetable and fruit

market, driving the trucks which transported the produce from the countryside. Life seemed to her to be back to normal for the whole family – including the grandmother from Cormons – busy giving a hand in the inn opened up in the city by the uncle. Giuliana continued to study: she would have reached the third year of commercial school. She even had to learn Slovenian.

The great change in their existence took place at the moment of the elections, held by the regime with a single list of candidates: her father was forced to go to the polls at gun point. A conversation followed with a boss at his job, during which he was told that to be a member of the party would be equivalent to getting a villa at Semedella, a car, the fulfilment of every need of his. *I had never been a fascist, I wouldn't have even become a communist* – was his parent's response. *So it is better that you take your family away* – was the reply of the interlocutor – *otherwise...* and an unequivocal gesture of the hand followed which horizontally marked the throat. They opted for Italy and headed towards Trieste, where slowly the family were reunited, around the figure of the aunt, who in the meantime had opened up an inn in via della Guardia. The situation, however, was not the greatest, both from the logistical point of view and the economic one: they were surviving, but not living. They decided to emigrate. At Bagnoli, close to leaving for the USA, they saw their embarkation blocked due to the completion of the admitted contingent. Canada turned out to be the second choice and they were moved to Germany, to Bremen Lesum. They made their father leave aboard the ship Fair Sea; the rest of the family later met up with him living aboard the ship Skaubryn. Of the camp of Lesum, Giuliana has memories softened by her adolescent age: huge dormitories, food based upon herrings, huge barrels of tea, spring beds which had an effect on the back. And she, who mitigated every discomfort, singing and learning to play ping pong.

The Steffes were reunited in the camp of St. Paul l'Ermite. Giuliana, thanks to her good knowledge of French, was hired as a domestic helper in the castle of a rich lady. *I, however, felt humiliated: she even wanted to check my teeth* – is her story. She also hired her father, as a gardener and driver: in this way the family was able to settle into the residence's guest quarters. 50 dollars a month per person was the salary. The relationship was interrupted, when she was rudely rebuked by her employer for having folded up the impressive little crest of her waitress' uniform. Giuliana quitted.

They moved to Montreal where, after various dwellings of fortune and thanks to the encounter with mother Pivetta, they found an adequate place. Everybody, in the meantime, had started their employment life: the father as an electrical welder, Giuliana and her mother in a clothes factory. Her marriage to Angelo in 1957, the

birth of two children – Antonella and Paolo – and, about ten years later, the purchase of the house in which they still live, followed. Very creative, Giuliana continued to be a seamstress at home. Her fantasy is demonstrated in the kitchen, where she manages to combine Istrian and Canadian traditional cuisines. For 13 years she has been the president of the association which gathers together the Julian-Dalmatian emigrants of Montreal. Looking at her past life, she declares that she would do everything all over again.

An Istrian-Canadian heart beats in each of the Pivetta spouses; *Istrian more than Venetian* – Angelo specifies, who saw Pola again for the first time just in 1988. His father, probably because he loved it so much, did not feel like going back even on a visit.

The Istrians have advanced together, allowing their children to affirm themselves – Angelo concludes, proud of his children's careers: Antonella specializes in the silversmithing art and Paolo, a musician, composer, expert sound engineer, all rolled in one.

SERGIO KELEMEN

10 years lived in the district of Belvedere and then in Borgomarina; the De Amicis school, with over 35 students per class, games in the fields, barefooted in summer... the frames of the memory run, while Sergio thinks back of Fiume, where he was born in 1932, the firstborn of three children, his father the owner of a bakery.

The problems began in 1943, after the armistice: a secondary school student at the time, he remembers the unleashing of the bombardments, the night time incursions of the partisans. *The purgatory began on the 3rd May, 1945, with the arrival of Tito's troops. We were psychologically struck, treated like saboteurs, despised as enemies of the people* – he tells. *In order to conduct a cleanup, they began to apply the suppressing method: many people of whom there was no news at all, immediately disappeared after the war.*

All this took place until the Treaty of Paris. Afterwards, even more perceivable was the resentment against any form of private property: soon his father's bakery was seized, which was nationalized. With the inventory at hand, from which – according to the reading of the people-in-charge – it turned out that a 100 kilogram sack of flour was missing, so his father was locked up in prison for a year. His mother had to look for a job: she began to work as a ticket inspector on the streetcars. At the end of the school year, after having decided to abandon his studies in order to be able to

contribute towards supporting the family, Sergio clashed with the obstacles deriving from his family's entry into the regime's *black book*. After a six month wait, he began to work as an employee amongst the subsidiaries of the refinery. Having returned home from the rigour of the Lepoglava prison – close to the border with Hungary – and a loader at the general warehouses, his father applied for Italian citizenship. After an eight month wait for an answer, the request was rejected, because the family nucleus was not recognized as having Italian as its mother tongue. The recourses drew out into a cut and thrust until August of 1950, when the Kelemens were able to obtain the document which gave them back their Italian citizenship. Having obtained the visa and having sent their luggage to Italy by train, on the eve of their departure for Trieste, two policemen unexpectedly picked up the father. Accused of stealing merchandise from his workplace, without any trial he was held for three months – practically up until the expiry of the validity of the so-called exit visa. With a kind of farce trial improvised in the end, which recognized the time that he served his sentence, he had only a few hours to use the almost expired visa, avoiding the risk of having to start the process all over again, actually from the Italian citizenship request.

In the previous year not even Sergio had been spared from hard sanctions, while waiting for his Italian citizenship to be recognized. His declaration of not wanting to perform pre-military service in the Yugoslavian army and the subsequent heated exchange of opinions with a Superior, had him condemned to two months of forced labour, then commuted into a suspension of salary for two months. Unforgettable was the help shown by his colleagues, who intervened with a secret collection of money on his behalf.

The day finally came in which the Kelemen family was able to leave. Stopovers along the journey were the silos of Trieste, Udine, Altamura; a connecting thread was the sprayings of DDT which they were subjected to and sleeping on straw mattresses. Sergio worked as a typist in the camp's offices. They adhered to the IRO's emigration project. New transfers to Bagnoli and Bremen followed, where Sergio and his father boarded the ship *Fair Sea*. The mother with the two younger children had to remain in the Lesum Camp, awaiting the following recall of the family members from Canada. Having arrived at their destination, marked by so many changes and by the many trials which up until then they had been subjected to, they were hoping that the hour had come to resume the habit of living. After a brief passage through the camp of Montreal, they were sent to work as labourers on the railway line: housed in the middle of the countryside, in wagons heated up and blackened by a barrel in which charcoal would burn. In a container outside there was water to wash oneself, but due to the rigid temperatures, would often freeze. It was then necessary to intervene

with a hatchet and bring the block of ice inside in order to make it melt: *and then we would wash our face all the way to the ears and our hands all the way to our wrists.*

After having finished that kind of work and with the arrival of the great winter cold, they returned to Montreal. The father continued to work with the railways, the son did many jobs: from shovelling snow from the railway tracks to washing dishes in a night club. Having found adequate housing, they were able to call their family members over. Having passed a four year course of specialization in the mechanical sector, Sergio was hired by Pratt & Whitney, a leading company in the production of aviation motors, where he worked for 37 years, developing a satisfying career.

Next to his side for over 40 years, his wife Giulietta, a Canadian, who by dint of hearing her husband's memories, learnt the dialect of Fiume and even the old names of the streets of Fiume. Three times a father and twice a grandfather, he returned for the first time to his native city in 1985: the trip was a gift from his family members on the occasion of his 25th wedding anniversary. Seeing his city once again was a pleasure for him, but at the same time he said to his wife: *I am home but I don't feel at home.*

He feels at ease in Montreal, *but do you know what I miss? The saltiness of the sea.*

CARLO HYRAT

A classmate of Eneo Ianora, met in the previous pages, like him he was born in Fiume in 1924. His life was similar to that of many youngsters of the time, divided between sports, school and carefreeness of youthful years. He had two brothers and a sister.

Born at Villa Ciotta, house of the first mayor of Fiume, the family later on moved into a house close to the cemetery, a structure of which his father – a forestry expert already at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – had become an inspector. Carlo's formative journey was interrupted shortly after he graduated in accounting. Registering at the University of Trieste, *it was difficult to reach the city of the university during the war: the trains were irregular* – he explains. He found a job at the Italian Credit Union of Fiume, and moved for a period to Lecco. Ordered to perform forced working service during the German occupation, in the postwar period it was Tito's troops who demanded his recruitment. Given that the group continued to profess itself to be Italian, they were sent on foot to Trieste, occupied at that time

by Tito's IX Corps. Decided not to show up at the garrison which they had been destined to and sensing the imminent arrival of the Anglo-Americans, they found refuge in the garage of a person who helped the veterans from imprisonment in Germany. Though finding the availability of the Allied troops for eventual transfers to other cities, the general situation disoriented Carlo. He could not foresee solid prospects and he felt responsible for his mother and sister, who had remained alone in Fiume: his father, in fact, had passed away, a brother of his had started his own family and the other one had still not returned from the German concentration camp. He returned to Fiume, where with the support of the right acquaintances, he managed to be hired, as a business consultant, in the State organization which looked after food distribution throughout the whole area of Istria-Quarnero. He even managed to get by with Croatian, given his Bohemian descent and a smattering of Slav languages. He married a girl from Sussak. In 1948, he opted for Italy and in 1949 he departed, alone. He was sent to Naples, to the male camp of Canzanella Fuorigrotta. A new name in our stories, but the usual settling into barracks with a least forty camp beds. *One survived. In order to scrape up a few coins, I went to work on a chicken farm. At least I could manage to buy a stamp in order to write back home. At the same time, through a few natives of Fiume, with whom I shared that experience and who had contacts with the San Carlo theatre, I was hired as an extra. Besides making me earn something, it was even an occasion for relaxation, because when I was not working on stage, I could watch the shows as a claqueur.*

Moved to the camp of Servigliano, in the province of Ascoli Piceno, he was able to be reunited with his wife. *We were lost, in the middle of the Apennine Mountains, without hope and without anything. It was an old prisoners' camp still from the First World War. Personally, I perhaps managed to make it through better than others, I worked in the offices and I could even find time to go fishing; but I had zero prospects there.*

Making the decision to emigrate, Carlo would have chosen Brazil, which he felt to be more in line with his tastes, oriented towards a lifestyle in contact with nature. The officer in charge of allocations, who in the meantime became his friend, was not of this opinion: he considered that it was better to put his name on the migratory lists for Canada. It was 1952. The Hyrats were registered as a couple of domestic helpers and from Bremenhaven left aboard the ship Fair Sea towards their future, which upon their arrival beyond the ocean looked rather hazy: in Montreal, in fact, in the camp they were informed that there was an employment crisis in progress, therefore the new arrivals could consider themselves free to go look for work on their own, except for the possibility of having board and lodging in the area. They

were hired by a small hotel in a holiday resort outside Montreal: the salary was 45 dollars per person per month, plus board and lodging, in a miniscule room with two camp beds and a small window. No specific working hours. The owner was originally from Torino. *For eight months I was a gardener, waiter, dishwasher; I could speak both French and English.* At the end of the season and moving to Montreal, Carlo found work in a bakery, as a home delivery employee: starting at five o'clock in the morning, using a horse drawn carriage. The first day he was assisted by a person to show him the way, then he found himself lost in the midst of unknown streets: luckily the horse had memorized the delivery rounds. After three years he found a solution to the housing problem, by accepting to be the concierge in a condominium. *The free availability of the housing was a good financial support for me for twenty years and this allowed me to give my three children the opportunity to study until university.* Since he could not find a job suitable to his experience and to his Italian academic qualifications, he had to adapt himself in various jobs, until he wound up at Atlantic Pacific, a big American food company. When the Company closed, he joined the Olivetti, where he remained until he retired, being in charge of the warehouse.

Thinking back, he could not imagine what could have changed: *choosing implies alternatives, but 50 years ago there were no alternatives. The first ten years in Canada were difficult, then one gets used to, it bit by bit.* He faces the experience with resignation and, with a veil of melancholy, he confesses that he tried to keep his descendants from the sad past, of which he was a protagonist: *why hand down our sufferings to our children?* – he asks himself. His children, two daughters and a son, speak Italian; the Fiuman dialect – he then proudly specifies. The bond with Italy continues even through his grandchildren, one at the academy of Brera and the other at the University of Siena.

Carlo Hyrat returned to Fiume on various occasions. *The first time I saw my sea again, it had a certain effect on me.* It is always his city but for him it is no longer the same: even if he has family members in those lands and his house still exists, it is not enough.

LICIA SANCIN widow HOFER

She immediately snatches a compliment from you, in saying her date of birth, in contrast with her appearance and her vitality: 24th July, 1919. Her surname – typically from Servola – proves that she is a native of Trieste. The last of five children, she had lived in via Vigneti 549, together with her mother and father, a naval mechanic and

a splendid person – Licia highlights. She went to the elementary school in Via dei Giardini, the junior commercial school in via Scuole Nuove. Then a brief working period in the Cambissa playing cards factory.

Married to a young man from Servola, with an Austrian father, she found herself spending the wartime period in Munich in Bavaria, where he, accidentally, had arrived for work right on the day of the outbreak of the war. An expert on electrical installations, upon returning to Trieste after the war, due to his professional qualifications he had some job offers from the American army in the Dalmatian-Quarnero area. There, Hofer did not see rosy prospects for the future. The thought, together with his desire to get to know the world, led him to the decision to emigrate to Canada. Licia was not at all convinced. A mother of two children, she chose to join her husband, after he was stabilised overseas. She left fifteen months after him, on board the ship Vulcania in Genoa, on the 18th December, 1952. She left Trieste with great regret, surrounded by the affection of friends and family members. *It was too much at the railway station. I still remember my father's words: don't cry, because I will come to visit you in two years* – she tells. She is seized by emotion when she remembers her brother, who wanted to accompany her and who kept close by her side. In her luggage there were a lot of paintings with scenes of Trieste, which she still has. She spent Christmas sailing: the ocean was rough and everybody suffered from seasickness. Not her son, who instead wanted to see the sharks, which his grandfather had told him would usually follow the ships.

Amongst the positive memories of the trip, there was the kind figure of the steward, who in the morning, after having cleaned the common bathrooms, would quickly inform her so she and her children could bath in a clean environment. For a good espresso coffee instead there was the kindness of the electrician on board. The crossing gave her also the opportunity to start the decades of long friendship which still ties her to Dolores, a native of Cherso, who was then going to get married in Canada.

Upon the arrival at Halifax, she was struck by the spectacular Christmas decorations and the covering of snow. She continued the trip aboard a train, which slowly advanced between two walls of snow, so much so as to give the impression of being on a trip to the North Pole. Having reached the destination, Montreal welcomed her with a spectacular display of lights, which she really enjoyed. Her husband was there, moved while waiting for her and their children. Licia felt bewildered by the trip, by the cold and by that question which sooner or later assailed all the immigrants: *where have I arrived? What will happen?*

The accommodation was instead in a beautiful apartment in a modern building. Thanks to his skill in electronics, her husband had found work at Canadair, in the

maintenance of electronic and radar systems. Clearly it contrasted from his initial job, shovelling snow.

Licia liked Canada right from the beginning: *there was an abundance of products and a variety of choice, low prices*. With regards to friendships, she had a way of forging contacts with some German families, who actually lived in the same block. The kids resumed scholastic life; learning a new language was easy as they had previous knowledge of German. She too found it easy to find work in an important tailor shop, where she remained for 14 years.

In 1970, Licia made her first trip to Trieste as a tourist. *Unforgettable remains the welcome that was reserved for me. They were four intense weeks, of meetings with family members and old friends, flowers, feasts and great hugs. Finding old habits once again, like the appointment for coffee in piazza Goldoni*. Her husband, who right from the beginning did not seem interested in returning to his native city and had let her leave alone, caught up with her after a week.

Their future, however, was beyond the ocean, with the children who had established themselves well and had started their own family. Of the two, only the daughter remembers Italian. A grandmother of four grandchildren and a great grandmother of a set of twins, who just understand a few words in Italian, after more than 50 years Licia Sancin now feels that her life is in Canada, where she is tied with feelings of liveliness, friendship and joy.

ARIANNA VIOTTO CAVALIERE

10 years in Fiume, where she was born in 1936, 8 in Trieste and over 50 in Canada: her journey of life makes her feel Canadian more than anything else.

In Fiume, we lived in an apartment in front of the Verdi theatre: there was a little garden, where I spent my childhood years – is her tale. Unfortunately, the unforgettable memories are tied to the war, like the bombardment of the bridge close to home, the windows which were smashed, the furniture ruined... They were three sisters and one brother.

Her family left Fiume immediately after the war, in 1946: first her father – who was transporting fish – and who found as an excuse the need to buy a spare part for the motor of his truck in Trieste. She and her brother followed their mother, who made the excuse that she needed a specialized doctor's appointment, in Trieste. The two elder married sisters remained in Fiume. Eventually, one moved to Genoa and the other to Canada.

We reached Trieste by train, just with a suitcase. Our past remained behind us, we knew that we would never go back, thus our morale was rather low, in sharp contrast with the splendid sunny day which welcomed us as we left the station. For many years I did not forge new friendships, which could make up for the ones left behind.

They found a place to stay in an apartment between Piazza Hortis and Piazza Venezia. Arianna went back to school. *Canada almost arrived as a consequence to the pulverization of the exile families in the world* – was her thought. Her sister in Canada had amongst her boarders a boy from Padova, who was struck at the sight of a photo of Arianna. After a year of exchanging letters, he wanted to meet her in person. He arrived in Trieste and there was a reciprocal lightning bolt: in 1954, they got married in the church of Sant'Antonio Vecchio, in Piazza Hortis. Her husband had to leave alone in order to take care of the recall. Having left Genoa aboard the ship Vulcania, the young bride arrived in Halifax on a rainy day in July. The first scene that she remembers are the workers wearing yellow oilskin, helmet and gloves who were passing bricks to build a house. Leaving for Montreal, somebody gave her a box of cornflakes, which made her curious: she did not know what it was. Amongst all of the discomforts of the well-known train, she even noticed the poor quality of the bathroom mirrors: she could not even see her image. She arrived at her destination: yet again she found herself leaving a railway station, on a splendid sunny day. ...which yet again highlighted a situation of discomfort in hers: she had to begin to adapt herself to a new reality, in a foreign land. She re-embraced her husband and sister.

More than half a century divides her now from those memories: 5 children, 9 grandchildren – a different levels, they all speak Italian – after her first return to Italy in 1963, she understood that she preferred Canada. She dedicated herself to the family full-time, while her husband – with a German partner – is the owner of a construction company.

Looking at her journey, she does not have regrets: *I am an optimist and I always try to find the better side of things.*

LUCIANO LECAS

... that is a story of a pure native of San Giacomo, who accepted to face himself with the gamble of life. He made it: bingo.

Born in 1929 in Trieste and having lived in via Cristoforo Colombo 1, in the heart of a historical district of San Giacomo, he even went to the Duca d'Aosta school,

and later to the Bergamas, located at that time in via Montecchi. The first approach with the working world took place in the laboratory of a dental technician: *he was good but careless – he remembers. He misplaced teeth and prostheses everywhere, and then we had to look for them. When he died, I continued with his colleague, who didn't pay me.* After six years working in the shipyard, he lost his job because of the shortage of orders. Almost at the same time Luciano made a request to join the Customs Officers Force – *which offered a better retribution, he explains – and another one for the V.G. Police Force, which immediately enlisted him. After 15 days, I received a letter from the Customs Office to hire me, but by then... If I had accepted, I would probably still be in Trieste.*

At the end of the Anglo-American Allied Military Government in Trieste, Great Britain offered him the prospect of being able to emigrate to one of the Commonwealth countries. He, who up until a short while ago had always been of the opinion that he would have never detached himself from his area, he moved to Gloucester, in Great Britain, for seven months: an unusual adventure, but on the whole pleasant for a young man. Having always had a passion for soccer and a fan of the Juventus team right from 1945 (*I saw it play for the first time in Trieste, when it played at Montebello; the stadium had still not been built, he tells*), during his free time he went back playing soccer for a local team. *In terms of work instead, I was part of the staff who, on a truck, was washing the streets. No great deal, but it gave me the opportunity to learn English: my colleague, in fact, only spoke his own language. Mine was not only a practical learning, because I also attended an evening course.*

He was ready to cross the Atlantic Ocean. He chose Canada, bordering the USA, where he too – like a lot of other interviewees – had family members. He left Liverpool aboard the Empress of Australia, a Canadian Pacific ship. It was the summer of 1955: with him were another three friends from Trieste.

Assigned to Quebec, *without knowing how or why*, once they arrived there, they found themselves without work. *An agency was recruiting people in order to cut trees in the forest, in New Brunswick. And we accepted – he continues. We earned, however, just that little bit which allowed us to eat. We were absolutely unprepared: we did not have the right equipment and the assault of the mosquitoes made us go crazy. One day, in order to get rid of them, I found no better solution than to dive into a creek with my clothes on.*

After two weeks of that experience, the four young men from Trieste gave up and moved to Fredericton, the capital of New Brunswick. They roamed aimlessly in the vast area of the unknown, without any contacts. Upon their arrival at the new destination, after having uselessly wandered in search of a place to stay, they

spent the first night inside a car, placed at their disposal by a Friulian, met in the restaurant where they had had supper. Their luggage was placed on the sidewalk, next to the vehicle. Woken up by a police officer for a check and having explained their case, they were told to go to a scrap yard: after a month of work, they moved to Montreal. Once having arrived there, with a bit of money still in their pockets and having read the sign *tourist rooms*, they went into what they thought was a hotel: it took a little while to understand that it was a brothel, and in an area which did not have a good reputation. Upon the recommendation of Immigration, once again they turned to the police, for a suggestion on where to find a place to stay. They wound up sleeping in the cells of a police station: *with open doors, however... Forget about it now! When they arrive, immigrants are immediately assigned a place to stay. We, instead, in those days would risk everything* – he comments. For their meals they found the Ubaldo restaurant in the Little Italy area, at the time the only one which cooked Italian style food. The owner's name was Della Santina: *he was a native of Trieste from San Giacomo of Friulian origins and his wife was from Pirano* (a town in Istria). Having found out where they were staying, a customer of Roman origin – a certain Foschi – nicknamed *the earl* due to his lifestyle (it can be recalled that he drove around in a Cadillac), expressed all of his reprehension by sentencing: *a native of Trieste in prison, never again*. Ubaldo would have already made credit on his own, but *the earl* wanted to guarantee. Having found a place to stay with a native of Capodistria, the four friends began to work at the port, for a transport and warehouse company. Successively Luciano, strengthened by his scholastic experience in the field of professional design and his past employment precedents at the shipyard in Trieste, was able to find a job in an airplane factory. A job which, during a semester of the company's production crisis, he took also a part-time job at the Ritz Carlton Hotel working at banquets, with two of his old friends, Montesi and Redivo – once waiters in Trieste at the Caffé degli Specchi. He moved *full board* to Davide Necson (whose family once had a junk dealer store in the ghetto of Trieste), married to the native of Capodistria Maria Codarin. In the vicinities of the new residence, there was the Dante pizzeria, run by a guy from Bassano: his sister became Mrs. Lecas. It was 1962.

Upon returning from his honeymoon, he surprisingly found himself unemployed, due to the reduced production of the company. So he accepted the job in a company that distributed the main Italian newspapers. For 14 years it was an interesting and gratifying job, until he chose to dedicate himself to the import of Italian clothing. A job which allowed him to return very often to Italy and to see Trieste again. For

quite a long time, in fact, despite his Canadian successes, his goal was to settle back in Trieste. It was an idea which was destined to fail before becoming a reality: Luciano, having found a good job offer in Vicenza, had sold his house, loaded his furniture into a container and with his wife and daughter had reached his eldest son. He was a student at the University of Trieste, but he wanted to go back to Canada. Furniture and plans headed home.



The Buonanotte restaurant in Montreal is the place where the big shots of international show business, cinema and sports get together; as can be seen from the autographs on the souvenir plates, kept in a display case on an entire wall

Not satisfied with such an existence, living in such an intense and varied manner, Luciano Lecas can now be found in one of the four restaurants which his son – with a degree and masters in economics and business, a former bank manager – opened together with his three friends of his (one is the son of Benito Pesut Balducci, met in the previous pages). The four friends have been very close for a long time; each of them had a successful career, but they preferred to work together in this joint venture which although very demanding, gives them a lot of satisfaction.

Buonanotte, Globe, Rosalie, Time are the names of the four restaurants, different in terms of locations, target and kind of food. The first one was Buonanotte, which with its opening even contributed to revitalization of the area which, at that time – in 1990 – was rather degraded. It is a meeting place for the international big shots of show business, cinema and sports, as can be seen from the autographs on the souvenir plates kept in a display case on an entire wall. The restaurant distinguishes itself for its wine cellar, which only proposes the best Italian wines. And here Luciano, having retired from his job goes about making potato gnocchi, Trieste style; at least 3,000 a week, very much in demand.

Many times he asks himself what his life would be like without Canada. *But it is difficult to find an answer* – he explains; *it is 25 years in Trieste against more than 50 in Canada. In the past, arriving in Monfalcone, I felt at home. Now I am always happy to go back, however in Montreal I feel at home.*

In any case I always speak Italian, even in the kitchen, where the staff is made up of two Peruvians who understand Italian, three from Bangladesh, two Iranians, three Pakistanis. I taught them the song La vecchia fattoria (Italian version of Old MacDonald had a farm) and upon those notes we start the chorus. Making gnocchi Trieste style.

BRUNO ZACCHIGNA

The *spargher* (kitchen stove) in the big kitchen where the many family members would get together, the firewood which the kids would go to cut in the forest, at Christmas an apple or an orange as a gift, sometimes his mother's *fritole* (fried sweets)... Here are bits of memories of his first years lived in the countryside of Umago, where Bruno was born in 1936. He thinks that his was a standard lifestyle for the youngsters of that time and so he is wondering about this interview. This is why his explanation is rather obscure.

His scholastic life was marked by some events: firstly the interruptions due to

the bombardments, then the new postwar reality, which forced him to sign up for Croatian classes. *The Italian lessons still went on, but the fear of vexations above all with regards to the males, made us choose accordingly. My cousin, a girl in fact, continued in an Italian school. I attended school until the age of 14, but I never learnt Croatian. They would not test us orally, and for written homework, I would copy. They were not proper teachers, who warned us about the fact that we were Italians: it did not matter a lot whether we did not know how to answer on those rare occasions in which they would address us.*

Having remained for a few years to look after the farm after the death of his father, he had to wait until the age of 18 to make his request to go to Italy. The answer arrived after a year. Bruno reached Trieste, which he had seen on the occasion of his Confirmation at San Giusto. *I was able to make my First Holy Communion in Umago, but in the postwar period all the priests had to flee.*

It was November of 1955 when he moved into the refugee camp of Padriciano. *There were many of us and there were housing problems. For me, the first one was in a hangar made of metal sheets: it was really cold. Life went on, similar in a way and at the same time different than the one of his many fellow townspeople, with*



Female students of the school set up in the refugee camp of Padriciano (from the album of the Morgan family)

whom he shared his experience. The prospects illustrated to him by Canadian officers during a visit to the camp appeared interesting to him and on the 21st March, 1957, he disembarked from the ship Saturnia at Halifax. At first he worked at the mushroom plantations in the hinterland of Toronto, then in Montreal as dishwasher, porter in a transport company, right up until his entry into the field of electro-mechanics, following the encounter with an emigrant from the Val d'Aosta (a region in Italy). A father of two children, who have completed their university studies and are well-established into the working world, Bruno now expresses himself both in English and French.

Having returned to Umago after many years, he does not know what to say or think: seeing his house inhabited by others hurts. He, however, had the old recipe of his mother's *fritole* given to him: he now makes them in Canada, where he now prefers to live.

REMIGIO CRAMERSTETTER

It is a memory that one cannot forget. I was born in Istria and I will remain Istrian forever. With a voice that is perhaps broken by emotion, Remigio begins his story like this – born in Castelvevère in 1936. *Like most Istrians dad was a farmer, he looked after the farm, the vineyard, the orchard...*

Though very young back then, he remembers the feeling of fear which began to creep into the life of the town, after the armistice of 1943: Germans during the day, partisans at night. *It was quite difficult for everybody to remain neutral.*

As often happened, his educational development was sacrificed: first done in Castelvevère in Italian and then in Croatian; in the end again in Italian, when he moved to Buie, *while the supporters of the new regime looked down at the students of the Italian classes with a certain annoyance.* Despite the opposition to the regime which came in after the war, his parents, however, did not follow their son when he chose to head towards the West. *I was around the world a lot during the war; I am now staying home* – was his father's thought. In 1956, Remigio Cramerstetter instead crossed the Italian border and the threshold of the refugee camp of Padriciano: in his bag, a prosciutto and a few coins. With him was his fiancée, a native of Cuciani, who lived until the wedding with a family in Trieste, where she had found work as a domestic helper. Moved to the camp of Villa Opicina, though with a few jobs in construction, they got caught by the enthusiasm and hope which infected a bit everybody, looking towards the countries beyond the ocean. Their child was a

month old when on the 8th March, 1957, they left Trieste aboard the ship *Saturnia*. Alongside the quay were the affection and tears of the father, who had specially come from Istria, family members and friends. *Canada was so big and questions without answers spontaneously arose in us: where are we going? What will we do? Who will be waiting for us?* They had left behind Trieste while flowers were blooming, in Canada they were welcomed by a snowstorm. Remigio did not know that he would make many corners of Canada bloom with flowers.

In Montreal, in fact, he immediately began to work as a gardener for a Dutchman: housed on his farm, he became a part of the team upkeeping the parks and gardens of various villas. His wife worked at home. Together, their salary amounted to 100 dollars a month. For a few years the initial plan remained alive, more or less like everybody else: *let us put a bit of money aside and then we go back*. After three years they stopped talking about it, because already in 1961 Remigio had the idea of starting off on his own.

Work was not missing and in the following year he integrated the care and the landscaping of gardens with the opening up of a garden centre. He began with a team of a few men. Now more than 150 people work for his company, the garden centre has an area of more than 600 hectares, including three flower shops. *It is incredible how Canada, though being a cold country, can offer such an extraordinary variety of flowers and plants* – he highlights with a passionate enthusiasm.

Even if they were immediately shot with success, the first ten years the work totally absorbed the Cramerstetters: only in 1967 did they allow themselves to take the first holidays. After the Expo, which marked a significant takeoff of the image and economy of Montreal.

Catalyzed by the flower-gardening centre activity, their three children who, having completed their university studies, chose to cooperate in the family business, *well-known and famous even in the eastern section of the USA* – as Remigio rightly highlights with pride. And where, as a confirmation of his success, he has some property in order to spend every year a few months of holidays and to dedicate himself to his favourite hobby: golf.

Despite the fact that the Cramerstetters' life is by now in Canada, however every three or four years they visit Istria and Trieste, *because our land is our land, it can never be forgotten* – he specifies. Important was the bond with the fellow townspeople who shared in their adventure in the new continent: in some kind of a way it has helped to create a kind of new big family.

FIorentino Martini

Called Tino – he specifies – and I was born in Materada d'Umago in 1940.

He got to know Istria and the war at the same time, but however he has some beautiful memories of that period: the satisfaction of making little soldiers out of the red soil, wet by the rain; the reed, which with the help of his godfather would be carved and turned into a flute; his stone house; the little pale in the *scafa* (kitchen sink); water being heated up on the fire, while the sparkles could be seen from the chimney... And the consoling voice of the grandparents, during the air raids: *the bombs that hurt are the ones that cannot be heard.*

His father – captured by the Americans during the African campaign – returning home from internment at the end of the war and having noticed the uncertainty of the borders, chose to move with the family to Trieste, where he began to work in the Mirelli construction company. For Tino it was the time to go to school: elementary classes at the Gaspardis school in via Donadoni, secondary classes at the Bergamas school. He, however, felt more inclined *handling a hammer and nails*. He began to work while managing to graduate from a professional course. The times were not easy and America for him had always represented a dream: through his father's stories, through the comic books received as a gift from the soldiers of the Allied Military Government stationed in Trieste, through his maternal uncle who already lived in the States. Emigrating to Canada could be a step taking him closer to that dream. His parents gave him the the choice to decide. And in 1958 the Martini family boarded the ship Saturnia. *In the baggage, some things from my mother's trousseau, very sentimental things, souvenirs; some utensils that my father wanted to take along with him, which I still have: some sickles, some things to clean the hoes, still belonging to my grandfather – he tells.*

As often happened during those trips, men and women were housed in separate areas. But this is not what disturbed the crossing: shortly after the departure, having crossed the Strait of Gibraltar, they ran into a storm which made the ship roll and which forced young Tino to feel so sick, that he kissed the ground when they docked at the pier. *I was a deceived eighteen-year-old. Young man, in our dreams the new continent represented a rose – he continues – but unfortunately, even if we had attained that rose by now, what I still ignored was that, in order to manage to smell its fragrance, I would have had first to climb its stem, with all of its thorns.*

Even the Martinis had been hired by the Sugar Company in the region of Montreal and, as already known, the work was very tiring. Even more difficult was the learning of the language and the insertion into society. Tino aspired to being a little

American, he did not want to be an assisted immigrant. *The local young people did not want us in their groups; if I only looked at a girl they would tell me to forget it, in a kind of division between first and second class citizens.*

They reached in Montreal their cousins, the Cramerstetters, already met in the previous pages. They joined them in the gardening work, until Tino was hired as a welder in a bulldozer factory. It was the beginning of his professional journey. Making his life gloomy were the passing away of his mother in 1968 and his father's consequent return to Italy.

The learning of the English language and of the new habits improved, while French remained a bit difficult as there were not many occasions in which to be able to speak it. The following step lead him to the Brown Boveri Company, an authoritative Swiss company in the field of electric power stations, which gave him the opportunity to grow professionally, by specializing himself in the sector of high power, and with which he worked for 35 years. His professionalism is still a reason of pride, given that his consultancy is still requested.

After so many years dedicated to work, he finally took time off to travel and to visit all of the United States and Europe, as well as to dedicate himself to sports during his free time. *When we work, we do so in a hard way – he smiles – but even when we have fun, we do it in a big style.* It was in such a way that he was able to take part in motorcycle races at Camerino, in Italy, and then in Austria and Great Britain, as well as in qualifying competitions around the United States and Canada. With good placings.

On a visit to his town of origin in 1978 with his wife – a Canadian, who gave him a son – he even had the opportunity to enter his native house, invited by the family from Montenegro, housed there after the last wartime disturbances in the Balkan area. Looking back he thought that, all things considered, the house had not remained at the mercy of time as somebody was looking after it.

Tino is an enthusiast, who loves life. Proud of his Canadian side as well as of his Istrian origins, to an equal degree he even loves Trieste: *the political situations must not affect us, our lives are determined by ourselves, for us and for those we love. The passage through this life is short – is his philosophy. It is, therefore, important to even take care of ourselves, set aside some money but even know how to enjoy it: the paper notes do not follow us beyond life.*

Amongst his passions, is the one for sailing boats. Not to mention flying. Always fascinated by technology, capable of making a helicopter remain airborne, he deepened his studies, trying to build a helicopter on his own. It was a bit too costly a hobby, however, and he fell back upon the purchase of a small plane together with a friend.

Determined, however, to build a plane on his own, in 1995 he managed to see his dream come true, by obtaining his pilot's licence with full score and clocking up more than 900 flying hours. Now he is even an instructor. A fine difference from the time in which he would wait for the arrival of the rain in order to make little mud soldiers. And he is rightly proud of it.

EDOARDO MAZZUCCA

Born on the 18th May, 1929, in a suburb of the municipality of Dignano, province of Pola – as he specifies – his dreams as a boy were the same as the ones of his fellow age mates of the time: *daydreaming over the reading of comic strips like the Intrepido, Fulmine, il Corriere dei Piccoli, there was a desire to travel the world, to go and free oneself from poverty.*

His father, a blacksmith by trade, had a small shop at Marzana: the village was economically lively and the paternal trade could have found a positive outlet there, after the Great Depression and a brief move to Yugoslavia, where King Alexander showed himself to be particularly attentive to Istria.

Edoardo had managed to finish his education, by correspondence, at the Scuole Riunite of Pola.

...and then, in 1943 the real war began even in Istria: the poor Italian soldiers who fled from Pola after the armistice, trying to find civilian clothing to put on, in order to avoid being deported by the Nazi troops; the arrival of the Germans on the Istrian coast with the absorption of our lands into the Third Reich; the partisans. Some were really good people, who just hid themselves in order to escape military service or in order not to wind up as prisoners in Germany, but there were also the Stalinists. They were terrible! They hurled so many innocent people into the foibes...

Significant is the anecdote of which Edoardo – at the time fourteen years old – was a protagonist. A partisan, having entered into his father's workshop in order to have his gun fixed, asked him whether he hated fascism. *I knew what answer had to be given and I said yes. At the question, however, of whether I hated Mussolini, I could not nod* – he continues, explaining the reason. It had happened that his teacher, having seen his good written compositions, had sent them to Rome: the Duce, besides sending him some books as a gift, had given orders that he receive free textbooks up until the completion of his studies. Having remained surprised by the answer, the partisan explained to him that, as he too was an Istrian, he would forget about

the reply; he, however, gave him the advice of not giving the same answer to the troops beyond Monte Maggiore, *because they would surely include him into the 13th battalion* (a way of saying that he would be thrown into the foibe).

Everybody was against everybody – he continues, telling of how the war left profound scars in his family, with the death of his brother in Mostar and of a sister in Auschwitz. *Luckily I still have a sister who lives in New York* – is his reflection.

At the end of the conflict, the paternal laboratory was penalized with such high taxes so as to have to close its doors. Edoardo managed to pay them with the prize money received from the devising of a new machine, when he successively went to work in a factory at Arsia, which made agricultural tools. At the moment of compulsory military service, the recognition earned him the assignment to the officers'school as an inventor. In his heart, however, he had always caressed the idea of escaping to Italy; his mother's precarious health conditions held him back. Almost at the end of the period of service, the moment arrived in which the options had to be presented. His choice in favour of Italy made his Superior have a fit of anger: he was chased away from the academy and condemned to ten days of hard imprisonment in Sarajevo. Assigned to forced labour, he lost an eye due to a sliver of duralumin. *Though in tragedy, I had the fortune of running into a Colonel, married to an Italian, who took an interest in my case, doing all he could to reduce the sentence: in other circumstances I would have found myself in prison for years.* Having served his sentence and an unsuitable soldier for service, he returned home, where he began to work as a mechanic, cultivating evermore in his spirit the desire to escape. The occasion arrived in 1957: thanks to the support of some fishermen, who got him a rowboat, the escape began from Promontore, with two friends. It was midnight when they left. It was three o'clock in the afternoon on the following day when in the open sea, although still in view of the Istrian coast, they were taken to safety by an Italian ship. At the police headquarters in Trieste, having contacted the Yugoslavian authorities in Pola by phone in order to ascertain their situation, they were defined as fugitive, insofar as expatriates without suitable documents. A frequent "crime" during that period, which was a sufficient reason for the granting of political asylum. First sent to the refugee camp of San Sabba and then to the one of Altamura, close to Bari, he received a letter from a fellow townsman who had emigrated to Paris, inviting to join him - dodging the red tape of Italian bureaucracy. He decided to cross at Ventimiglia the border with France, once again illegally. Together with him was a refugee from Medolino, met in the camp. They crossed the Maritime Alps on foot: a night out in the open, the cold air and the memory of small streams with clear and good drinking water. In order to feed themselves there was wild grapes and figs. They

bumped into a local man – *his surname was Grimaldi, like the prince of Monaco; certain memories remain impressed* – Mazzucca inserts into his story. He refreshed them and hosted them while waiting for the right moment to cross the border. An adventure trekking in the night, through paths, which crossed valleys and plateaus, until at dawn they found themselves in French territory. By bus as for as Nice, then by train they reached Paris. They went to the gendarmerie: in order to receive help, they confessed the irregularity of their arrival, but from a guard, who fortunately spoke Italian, they found out that the Napoleonic code immediately regularized the position of foreigners, even if they arrived illegally, as long as they were not sought after for crimes. *I love Napoleon, but where are we going to sleep tonight? Arrest us, so we can spend the night with a roof over our heads* – was Mazzucca's question. They were allowed to sleep in a prison cell with an open door: when they woke up they were even given a good breakfast. Accompanied to a refugee camp, Edoardo remained in Paris working as a mechanic until 1960, when he chose the way that led to Canada, in order to be able to have a nationality. His friend returned to Medolino.

He started his life in Montreal, by combining work with evening classes in order to perfect his linguistic preparation. In the company where he had found a job, he almost immediately distinguished himself with the creation of a new kind of mechanic valve. Something which once again earned him a prize. Having moved to a company which produced hydraulic parts for the aviation industry, he later on followed his boss, when he began his own business. At the same time his continuous creative ferment, made him invent a device in support of the reading of technical designs and plans. Deposited in many countries, the patent in Italy had to quibble with the bureaucracy, an antagonist recurring in Mazzucca's life, who mentions the example of his recognition of Italian citizenship: *after 50 years of applications and waiting, I discovered in 2002 that I was an Italian citizen, but the communication, despite the fact that the requests had all left from Canada, had been sent to Altamura...*

Conditioned in his working career due to the injury of an eye, caused by the forced labour following his option to remain an Italian, his request to the INPS (social welfare fund) for an invalidity pension was rejected, *because he didn't pay the contributions and he didn't serve in the Italian Army* (the war ended when he was 16 years old!!!).

He continues to feel Italian, but a part of him is Canadian, because that land has given him life, work and a pension.

Betrayed by destiny a few years ago with the death of his son, he adores his adolescent granddaughter who however lives in Pola, where her father had moved to during the time of the great American recruitments for Vietnam.

With his memory still firmly tied to Istria, Mazzucca dedicated various poems to his land, from which the verses reported here below are taken:

*... I remember the Istrian dawns
when the sun would gild the mountains, the sky and the sea
and the good Istrian people would go to work
and in the evening, tired, would return singing to the warmth of the home.*

*... it is a call to the Istrians at home and scattered throughout the world,
to never forget the places they were born in.
It is better to experience torture, imprisonment and hell,
than to lose the character of proud Istrians.*

... and we return to Ontario: appointment in Ottawa

More or less 118 miles – the equivalent to about 190 kilometres – and with an impeccable railway service, one arrives in Ottawa from Montreal.

Usually forced to have to combine little time and long distances, during travelling to meet up with our fellow countrymen beyond the ocean, through the years the author has had the opportunity to acquire greater experience with airlines than with railway transportation. Once having discovered, however, that in Canada, for short distances – comparing the price paid and the time saved – the train was to prefer, it was a very pleasant surprise to discover all the merits of travelling by rail. The first class ticket allows you to wait in a lounge where newspapers are available, or watch television and enjoy various kinds of comforts; in case of heavy luggage, one can get the help of a porter right to the point of boarding; during the trip, depending on the distances, a meal or a snack can be chosen from the menu, accompanied by beverages served by pleasant stewards.

The mentioning of the railway is not casual. On Christmas Day of 1854, the arrival of the railways meant, in fact, the beginning of the future for the village of Bytown, a state of chrysalis from which a week later – on the 1st January, 1855 – the butterfly officially came out to be the city of Ottawa. In 1857, Queen Victoria proclaimed it the capital city of Canada.

100 years later for many exiles from our lands, the city became the place where they restarted an interrupted existence.

OTTORINO RAVALICO

A dialect which maintains a typically Istrian accent, a journey of life aligned with the one of many of his fellow townspeople, with whom he shared the experience of the exodus and emigration. And yet, there are some flashes which even personalize the replay of the memories of Ottorino Ravalico, born at Villanova di Verteneglio in 1936. Still a numerous family: his parents, three children, uncles, aunts and grandparents. His father, a farmer, above all looked after the vineyard and the production of wine. His father and uncle were also members of the band and choir, particularly active during processions and feasts, like the one of the patron saint – Saint Michael – in September, or of Saint Lawrence. He remembers *el fogoler* (kitchen stove) the

hearth of those far distant winters, always lit up and the clothes constantly hung near to dry. *There was a terrible cold: when we would go to bed, my mother would even put on top of the blankets coats and whatever else could remedy that discomfort. A weight... However, overall it was not all that bad: we were not rich, but we had never been poor. We never suffered from hunger – he tells. And then there was the traditional food: fritole at Christmas, lamb, turkey or pinze (a typical cake) at Easter. We used to eat a lot of fish, really delicious, bought from the fishermen arriving from Cittanova... We managed to remain quite far from the war and from its disasters. Then Tito and his corruption arrived... My brothers had to attend Slav schools, because the Italian ones no longer existed; I didn't, because I stopped at grade five.*

The family had to deal with the excessive taxes inflicted on the property; the refusal to pay by an uncle, cost him the expropriation of his wine production and the intervention of the police. *The people appeared melancholically disoriented, the town was emptying itself bit by bit.* Having gotten married to Giuseppina Penco, a girl from a nearby town – Medelini pronounces Ottorino – the young head of the family decided that that situation was unbearable to him and so he made request to leave. It was the 26th February, 1956, when as a refugee he reached Trieste together with his expecting wife. They arrived by bus, while the few things allowed to be taken along with them, had been loaded onto a truck: personal effects, a prosciutto (a ham), a few demijohns of wine, in whose straw bottom he managed to hide 60,000 Italian liras. They were welcomed at the border by a cousin, who would have hosted them for a few days in via Madonina. *Let us go on foot, we'll take a stroll* – was his family member's proposal, which they accepted, not knowing however that they would have had to travel more than 15 kilometres. An anecdote now impressed with a smile, but surely not appreciated back then. Settled then into a refugee camp, first at Sistiana and then at Opicina, they looked with optimism beyond the Atlantic Ocean, after the promotional visit of the Canadian immigration officers. The decision was as fast as the departure was: on the 14th September of that same year, with his wife and newborn son, Ravalico climbed aboard the train for Milan, to board the airplane which would take them to Montreal. Sent to look after the cows and horses in the farm of Mr. Chandler – a government officer – Ottorino clashed with the person in charge of the estate, a German who immediately and openly showed his personal disdain for Italians. After the latest altercation and having he risked being repatriated, he explained the situation to the Immigration Office. The young Istrian was moved with his small family to the farm of a Scottish livestock breeder: *130 cows to look after, a very dirty environment, housing in a crumbling and cold hove, where raw eggs would freeze. Everything for 25 dollars a month, excluding*

meals – is Ravalico's story. Having met a certain Mr. Benny – considered by Italian emigrants to be a kind of *old sage*, due to his fifty year experience of life in Canada – he was calmed down and informed about the opportunities that that land could offer. With his family and baggage he moved to Ottawa, “forgetting” to inform his farmer, and the Immigration Office, which for a year continued to look for him. At the new destination, he first found a job at 65 cents an hour with a company which packaged recycling paper, followed by work in the construction sector. It was a winning choice which allowed him in a few years to move from being an employee to be an owner. His company – which he ran for 24 years – had 110 workers and a turnover of 20 million dollars a year.

He is now the owner of a business agency, looking after real estate investment. Beside him is his wife who, during the first years of settling in, supported him with her work as a furrier.



14th September, 1956: Ottorino Ravalico, with his wife and newborn son, leaving for Milan, where they will board the plane that will take them to Montreal

Despite the obstacles at the beginning of his life in the new continent, Ravalico always appreciates Canada for the support it gave him, and the beautiful friendships with its people. He, however, continues to feel 100% Istrian: he has kept alive the language of his roots even with his two children – a male and a female – perfectly integrated into the Canadian society. It is practically impossible to do it with his two grandchildren, who have a Canadian mother.

A bit at a time the traditions are fizzling away – he concludes. Once our generation is gone, I don't see the following ones interested in keeping our customs alive. Our children at most know that they exist, but they are not sufficiently involved. A shame however...

EZIO AND PINA DEL BELLO
ENRICO STOPPA

You didn't have anything but you had everything – are the words with which Ezio summarizes his childhood years at Villanova di Verteneglio, where he was born in 1933. There were 22 of them in the family: his parents with 9 children, grandparents, uncles and aunts and 6 cousins. Black and white memories, which the interviewee wants to give shape to through a photograph of the time. But the attempt is interrupted at the beginning: the emotion takes over. *There were the youthful years, playing soccer, life in the town, school in the morning, Sunday Mass... Once having grown up then, there were the cliques, with whom one would hang out at the inn or would go to dance... Not that we were rich, however having some land in the countryside, thank God we never suffered from hunger, not even during the harsh moments.* Of course, for an adolescence which has even gone through the years of the war, the memory does not always rest upon the cotton wool.

In the postwar period, having finished school, he began to work with his father: in the countryside, looking after the vineyards, the olive groves for olive oil, grain and watermelons, *some weighing up to 30 pounds* – he highlights; and then even helping out in the family inn. That world, however, was beginning to be tight for him and on the 28th September, 1955, having received government permission, he took the bus to Trieste: only one way. In the bag that he had, a change of linen, a few shirts and a pair of pants: *in those days who had ever seen a set of jacket and pants!*

He first settled at the camp of Opicina, then in the one in via Carsia. Lacking every job experience in the sector, he improvised himself as a construction worker, working for many construction companies. *I even worked in the quarry, loading trucks with*

rocks. It was a question, however, of small jobs during the day, almost always “illegally”, surely not a premise for a great future. He decided to seek his future beyond the ocean and on the 8th March, 1957, he boarded the ship *Saturnia*. The trip, thanks to the fact that his cousin worked on board as a waiter in the officers’ mess, practically turned out to be a cruise. Even when his 18 table companions had to withdraw because of seasickness: he managed to eat 8 boiled eggs. Certainly a good support for his stomach. The magic was shattered in Halifax, which welcomed him with a snow-storm. *But what do you mean, in Trieste the buds were beginning to sprout?!?...* In order to play down the situation, a native of Capodistria – from their group of young Istrian emigrants – proposed an inaugural toast, with a general shot of grappa from a bottle that was made to go around amongst the friends, gathered together in a circle; the contents was simple water, but nobody had the courage to point it out.

With the label of the destination hung around the neck, they climbed aboard the train: a week’s trip, heading to Winnipeg. After a stopover in that city and spending the night at a local immigrant’s house, Ezio resumed the trip towards the destination assigned: Melfort, in Saskatchewan. With him were a friend from Isola and one from Buie, with his wife and a little daughter. When they arrived, total disorientation attacked them, finding themselves in the midst of an expanse of snow under which, only the roofs of houses could practically be seen: an effect of the abundant snowfalls and of the blowing wind, that had carried and deposited the snowy blanket to the sides of the buildings. A man dressed like a cowboy, having seen the tags around their necks, with a hint made them climb into a station wagon and took them to his farm, where they settled in for the night. The following day, each one of them began their own Canadian journey. Del Bello was assigned to a farm of Dutch colonists, with whom he lived as a boarder. Strengthened by his previous farming experience in Istria, he immediately entered into harmony with his work. In June, however, he decided to reach his cousins in Ottawa, which became his adoptive city and where, on the 8th March, 1958 – exactly a year after his departure from Trieste – he was joined by his fiancée Pina, she too from Istria and whom he had met in the refugee camp of Opicina. As for employment, after many varied jobs in different sectors (from the paper mill to the butchery), he consolidated his position as a carpenter. In the 1970s he changed again, reaching a gratifying qualification as a parquet layer, which allowed him to open up a successful company of his own.

The story at this point is enriched with the contribution of the two voices of the wife and the brother-in-law of Ezio: Giuseppina and Enrico Stoppa, natives of Merischie, *from the parish of Momiano* – as they specify: she was born in 1937, he in 1940.

The first female after generations of males, Pina in her infancy was treated *like a queen*, especially by her grandmother, Angela Bonazza. Money did not abound, but overall they were well-off, owners of livestock and of land in the countryside, from which they would get everything that they needed in order to live: *only salt and sugar would be bought* – Enrico specifies. The memory of the house lights up the two brothers' eyes: *it was really big, in stone, having three storeys. Unforgettable was the panorama: not only could Sicciole be seen, but on clear days a person's sight could run all the way to Grado, beyond the Dragogna river. The wine cellar was big, where wine, especially Muscat wine, was produced, ordered by*



The refugee camp of Opicina made Ezio Del Bello and Pina Stoppa meet

the various inns in Trieste. And then memories of the war and the postwar period cross their minds, cloudy in some parts, bitter sweet in others: confused and contrasting dates, German troops surrounding the town and in the meantime a soldier who, taking into his arms little Enrico who was wandering about in the courtyard, takes him back to his mother's home; their father taken away at night and forced to enroll with the partisans, who did not want to believe his illness; the father of one of Pina's little friends, mowed down during an exchange of gunfire in front of their house. Our dad died in 1948: he had been a soldier in the Italian army, but my mother never managed to benefit from his pension. In order to survive and to be able to pay the labourers who worked on our land, she would sew stuffed blankets and mattresses. But being a woman, she did not manage to have a great say on the subject and then, let us not forget that the new regime even expected the delivery of a part of the harvest.

Finding herself in a tight position, mother Stoppa asked to be able to leave: they obtained the visa and the authorization to take away the basic necessities. The only "valuable piece", a cow, was sold upon their arrival at Muggia. Housed in the refugee camp of Opicina, Pina was employed in a textile factory of the free port in Trieste, while Enrico after having attended the school of the Villaggio del Fanciullo, entered into the Lucky Shoe factory, a footwear factory, also in the free port. The possibility hovered of meeting up with family members who had emigrated to Australia: Pina did not agree. She did not know that within a short while she would meet Enrico, leaving for Canada...

Even a part of the sea was frozen, when she too landed in Halifax from the ship Saturnia, asking herself whether she had arrived in Siberia. The sensation grew even stronger during the trip towards Montreal, when the well-known train – by now described in details way in the previous pages – broke down in the middle of the night, remaining stuck for long hours in the middle of a forest of conifers, buried by the snow. A travelling companion of hers was a friend, who like her was going to join her fiancé. Two weeks later in Ottawa, the two girls got married in a collective wedding, wearing the same wedding gowns and... with a single automobile available for the spouses and guests. Until today the two couples celebrate their wedding anniversaries together.

Despite the happy start, the first moments were not that easy: besides the difficulty of the language, there were even economic constraints to deal with. Having gotten married on a Saturday, Pina started to work on the following Monday, as a cook's assistant at the St. Patrick's College. She then chose to move to a tailoring shop, where the salary was 33 dollars a week, compared to the previous 19 dollars.

...The moment came for the family to be together again, after their recall for her mother and brother, who also arrived aboard the ship *Saturnia*. Mother Stoppa inserted herself well into the new reality, improving in health, learning the language and working in the laundry, set up in the seminary annexed to the church of Saint Anthony. Enrico, unhappy at the beginning of the migratory experience, soon amalgamated himself with new friendships and started a fruitful job as a tile layer. He understood that his roots began to sink in Canada above all after the birth of his sister's two children. On her part, Pina resumed her studies, which allowed her to get a satisfying job in the provincial government offices, where she worked for 25 years.

After many years in Canada, the tie with Italy and with Istria continues to be strong in all of the family members. Even in the children, who obtained good employment jobs: one in the field of computers, the other in the furnishing sector.

However, we are really tied to this country – concludes Pina. We are an apple cut in half, with the Atlantic Ocean in the middle. We do not forget that perhaps the Canadians were much more gentle towards emigrants than the Italians were with the refugees...

LIDIA BUSDACHIN widow MARTINI

A fighting spirit, acquired in a surely not easy life, finds a sweet union in the amiableness of this lady, who connects her hardship with her childhood years in Vinella di Buie, where she was born on the 10th October, 1920. Her father a stonecutter, her mother a housewife, a single room in which to live: her parents had a bed in which to sleep, she and her brother (who during the war died in Russia) a mattress on the ground. The family had to move frequently, following the father, always in search of a better job: Salvore, Verteneglio, Carsette...

I did well at school, however I had to stop in grade five, despite the teacher's attempts to convince my father to make me continue studying: there was no money. I moved in with a maternal aunt of mine at Capodistria and I went to work as a domestic helper in the home of a couple who were hairdressers.

Playing a part at that point was the photograph which was taken of herself at Easter and which she sent to her mother as a gift: it was a bolt of lightning for Raffaele Martini, a young blacksmith from Carsette, who not long after became her husband and, between 1940 and 1954, the father of their 8 children. *Those were hard times. In order to be able to scrape together a sack of flour or a few potatoes,*

I would card wool and make mattresses. I still have that needle. My husband after the war went to work in the workshop of the bus company, but the family subsidies were the same for everybody, independent of the number of children. The day in which I heard that I should not have produced so many, I pounded my fist so hard on the table of that functionary, as to spill the ink all over him... and then I went to ask for permission to leave the country. It was 1956. Leaving was my greatest luck in the world – is her reflection – and Canada was an even greater luck.

In Trieste, they were settled into the shacks of Zaule: a room with bunk beds, for parents and children, ranging from 16 to 2 years old. *And it was actually the smallest one who started singing “La casetta in Canada”, when the officer of the sugar factory beyond the ocean visited the area.* They left aboard the ship Saturnia, conscious of the fact that they would never return, but happy about that trip of hope towards the better. The eldest daughter was not with them: she had got married and was already living in Canada.

It was the 1st of May when they arrived in Halifax, stunned by the snow and the cold. *The postbellica* (a humanitarian association) *had given us some jackets in order to cover ourselves up* – she continues. *At the train station in Toronto, our numerous family struck the press and the picture that was taken of us was featured in the local newspaper.* They were sent to Chatham, where they were settled into a beautiful country home. Excellent was even the relationship with the person in charge of coordination, who did all he could in order to have a set of 12 plates sent to Mrs. Lidia, in substitution for the one shattered to pieces during the transportation. They stayed on that farm for three years, finding friendship and cooperation. The work, however, was harder: harvesting cobs, sugar beet, tomatoes. *I can't remember how many baskets I filled up. And how many backaches! The earth was very hard, so much so as to make the little hoes escape from the hand.*

The research for their promised land ended in Ottawa, where they moved to upon the advice of a fellow townsman and where her husband worked as a gardener in a flower-growing company, until the end of his days. Lidia, after 10 years in an operative cleaning company at the headquarters of the Mounted Police, retired greeted by all of the members of the staff, who had grown attached to her.

The needle for mattresses only remained a memory of days long gone, but she rediscovered her great passion for crocheting. She made some real masterpieces, which made headlines in the newspaper: from tablecloths to curtains to bedcovers. She was embarrassed in asking to be remunerated for merchandise of great value, it is touching to hear her tell that *the thread was expensive and therefore I would ask to have that expense covered. For the labour they could perhaps clean my garden*

of the leaves or the road of the snow. Una man lava l'altra e tute due lava el viso (an Italian proverb meaning to give reciprocal help).

She returned to Istria for the first time in 1967. She realised that she was much happier in Canada, where now she has 15 grandchildren, 14 great grandchildren and 1 great great grandchild, who – everyone in his own way – speak Italian. 5 generations of Istrians in Ottawa.

GIOVANNI AND AURELIA RIOSA

Nicknamed Ondino, due to his great passion for swimming, Giovanni was born at Isola in 1920; *but I am a real native of Capodistria* – he specifies.

With his parents, his brother and sister, he lived near via San Nazario. The house was not all that big, but it had a nice vegetable garden in front, where his mother would grow radicchio and flowers. *I would go to school when the teachers were not present* – he jokes – that means he preferred skipping classes, so as to go along the coasts as beachcomber, just to earn a few coins to go to the movies. *I liked to steal grapes and peaches in the countryside! I had a group of friends, that if we could meet today there would be quite a lot to talk about. We would play with a rag ball, practically a woman's pantyhose stuffed with grass, without shoes anyway. Slippers were worn on feast days.*

He went on to work as a construction labourer, in 1940 he was *bersagliere* at the outbreak of the conflict. Taken prisoner in Africa, after almost seven years he was able to return to his native city, where he found himself facing the new reality of the postwar period. A commuter for a few years with odd jobs in Trieste, in the construction sector, he then went on to run an inn in via San Pietro in Capodistria. *A stone's throw from the sea* – he highlights – *however, I was persecuted by a policeman who found all the excuses to inflict upon me a daily fine of 1,000 Yugoslavian liras: either for late closure or for earlier opening. It was a way to take away money from me and to convince me to go away. They, however, made me wait for the authorization to leave, until they were sure that they had dried me up.*

He arrived in Trieste with his wife Aurelia Gorella – born at Monte di Capodistria in 1931 – and his two little daughters, the youngest one just being 27 days old. The furniture wound up in the port at the silos, while the small family was accommodated into the shacks of the refugee camp of San Sabba, in front of the Risiera. *The first shack on top was ours, behind the butchery. The housing was really poor* – the lady tells – *there was no canteen and I had to cook in the small room, where they slept in*

bunk beds. The youngest daughter wound up in the hospital due to frostbite, because of the cold temperature in our camp.

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Rilasciato a
Issued at

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The travel ticket bought by Giovanni Riosa to take his family to Canada with the ship Saturnia

That was their housing for two years, while Ondino worked for the *postbellica*, which coordinated the assistance and the housing for the refugees arriving from Zone B.

Having met a woman from Quebec of Neapolitan origins, on a promotional tour to attract emigration to Canada, immediate was the decision of the Riosas to start off towards that experience. They left as tourists, paying for their own ticket: they paid off half of the travel cost with the gratuity received at the end of their work in the camp. They left aboard the ship *Saturnia*. About Canada, they only knew that it was big and that it seemed to be the promised land: the propaganda photos showed flowers, houses and cars. *How could you not fall in love with it?* Upon their arrival in Halifax they discovered the hard reality, made up of ice and snow. From the train, heading towards Montreal, Giovanni caught a glimpse, beyond the windows of some hovels, of people who were working inside *in T-shirts: despite the snow outside, it had to be at least warm inside* – was his thought.

Settled in with a French family, on the farm which they had been sent to, Ondino's new life began: *a man in blue overalls, heavy boots, with a crooked mouth due to the tobacco that he was chewing with energy, handed two horses over to me* – he tells. *I needed a chair in order to put the reins on them. A sled was attached behind, with two containers in order to collect maple syrup.* One of the typical Canadian products, the liquid gushes forth from the tree trunk, upon which a tube had been inserted into, which in drops makes the serum drip into the container hung at the bottom. After the collection, the juice is boiled in order to make it concentrated. Perhaps it is interesting to note that from 5 gallons of the product collected, after the boiling only about a gallon of the syrup is left.

During the trips into the forest, Riosa recalls that there was so much snow that it came up to the horses' belly. Overall, that period of settling in was not bad: the housing was in a cosy, warm home; the French with whom they shared it were amiable. Besides the maple juice harvest, Giovanni even had to look after a herd of cows.

After having done various jobs, there was the move to Ottawa, where he began to work at noon on the 9th April, 1958. *Without ever losing a day of work until I celebrated my 65th birthday* – he specifies with pride: as a labourer in charge of deliveries for a knife factory, until his final job, in a city hospital. So great was his commitment to his work, that he was able to buy his first house, three years after their arrival in Canada.

He returned three times to Capodistria: *the first time I felt sick, the second time I felt about to die, the third time even worse* – the examples with which he explains the emotion felt.

He is, in any case, happy with his life in Canada, where another four children of his were born. *It was not easy – his wife intervenes. For quite some time I went to work as a domestic helper in families. I did not have any time left to get to know the new land. And then I had to look after 6 children: helping them with their homework, we too were able to become familiar with English.*

Up until 1974, the Riosas never became Canadian citizens, continuing to believe in the hope of being able to return to Italy: then they realised that the country which they lived in was their new Motherland. In the family, however, they continued to speak Italian and after many years Aurelia still feels Italian, while Ondino classifies himself as *more Istrian than Italian*, as he has been photographed with the Bersagliere's hat on his head.

CARLO AND MARIELLA HRIBAR

At Cittanova, where he was born on the 4th November, 1937, Carlo as an adolescent was the sacristan in the church of San Pelagio. *The parish priest was Father Placido Norbedo, a native of Capodistria: I remember that the day of the patron saint, the 28th August, was a big festivity – he tells. There were more than 3,000 inhabitants but, as the sacristan, I think that I had the opportunity to know almost everybody, either by name or by nickname.*

At home, besides his parents, there were seven siblings. His father was a blacksmith and in the meantime farmed a piece of land in the countryside. The five-year wartime period, which Carlo experienced as a boy, left certain ugly impressions and perhaps marked more than ever the childhood memories: the arrival of the Nazis, the shootings, the shooting at the town's drummer boy – who at the rolling of his instrument cried out the last pieces of news in the streets – mistaken for an anti-German instigator...

Having finished his education up until the third year of industrial arts in Italian schools, as a sacristan he found himself having to even firsthandly face the difficult situation, which was created for the Church with the new leaders. The last serious episode took place when, on the occasion of a celebration of the regime, someone put out of use the loudspeakers, placed by government emissaries on the bell tower: Carlo and the parish priest, with knives at their throats, had to undergo hours of interrogations on the part of the People's Guard, in search of those responsible for the sabotage. Evermore conditioned by the fear in which it was forced to live in, the Hribar family had no other choice but to leave. Having submitted a request, they had

six days to leave. It was even very difficult to find a truck: *we had to go and look for one at Umago. The people were by now being controlled and whoever wanted to leave could not find help* – Carlo's story continues. It was the 25th June, 1954, when together with the family he left Cittanova for Trieste, fearing the present and uncertainty of the future. After a first three day settling in at the "Alla fortuna" hotel, in the vicinities of the Central Post Office, they were moved to the refugee camp of Opicina, where they faced one of the most freezing winters of Trieste: *in the shack, in order to keep the fire alight, they would take turns getting up during the night. But how cold it was, when they had to go to the toilet, at about 200 metres from the dormitory!...* he remembers. Having brilliantly passed an electro-welder course at the *Villaggio del Fanciullo*, in November of 1956 he was hired by the San Giusto Shipyards. His mother began working at the day-hotel in via Veronese. Moved to the camp of Villa Carsia in October of 1957, after the wedding of three sisters, there were "only" 5 left living in a room (*at least we were together; at Opicina the men and the women were divided*). They thought about Canada as a solution but, with the father passing away, only Carlo and his nineteen year old brother Franco were accepted: the mother was considered to be too old, the two younger brothers too young. For the two boys who were leaving, besides an adventure, that trip represented the dream of a future. They arrived in Montreal with a turboprop airplane, after a 15 hour flight from Rome, together with a hundred fellow townspeople. It was the 25th May, 1960. Moved to London in Ontario, they felt as if they were being auctioned off, inspected and chosen by the farmers, for whom they would have had to work. The two young Hribar boys were fortunate to remain together on the farm of a nice family, of Hungarian origin: there were the cows to look after and to milk, the henhouse to look after, the eggs to collect. 25 dollars a week was the remuneration, in addition to the salary earned harvesting tobacco: these were the starts for the first reimbursement payments of their tickets to Canada, amounting to 249 dollars. They managed to pay off what was owed, after having moved to Ottawa, where they had some friends and where they found work on the railways: they even obtained a 15% discount for their early repayment.

Even if very tried by their har work, our emigrants found consolation and relaxation in soccer games. Carlo too began to play on the team that gathered together immigrants from all over the Italian regions: Lazio, was the team's name.

After a year had gone by, Carlo had his fiancée join him, met during the time of the refugee camp of Opicina: Mariella Riccobon. A native of Capodistria, with her parents and a sister finding refuge in Trieste in 1956, following the serious threats which her father had been subjected to, accused of absenteeism at the frequent en-

counters organized by the new ruling class in power. Up until then her family was able to count upon a certain economic wellbeing, because her father produced tomatoes for the local sauce factory. It was, therefore, a different life from the one begun again at the House of the Emigrant in Trieste, with the well-known dormitories divided by hung up blankets, bunk beds, in promiscuity with other family units. The following settlement at Opicina guaranteed a pinch of improvement, with a room entirely for the four of them. And then Mariella met Carlo...

She left for Canada, happy to meet up with her fiancé, *dreaming of the famous little house with pools and little fish and a lot of lilac flowers. Once having arrived, however, I cried for a year, in secret not to be seen by my husband – is her story today. I could not understand the language, I missed my family, I felt lost. But Carlo did not deserve my sadness. I told him about it only when everything was settled.*



25th November, 1961: the wedding of Carlo and Mariella Hribar in Ottawa

Mariella even took her wedding gown along with her in her suitcase, sewn by her sister, who was a seamstress. It was short, according to the fashion at that time, but she had to go buy another one, a traditional one, in order to satisfy the groom's tastes. Their wedding day was a beautiful day of feasting, with a lot of friends, but tinged with sadness for the bride, by the nostalgia for the family. She consoled herself by thinking that that experience would be transitional: *it just needed time to put together a bit of money to return to Italy...*

In the meantime the Hribar brothers made the two other brothers still in Italy to join them in Canada. They even managed to open up a small construction company, quite successful until the economic crisis of 1979, which Carlo avoided by going to work for 14 years as a foreman for a Dutch company. Then he went back working on his own again.

45 years in Canada, a son and a daughter, both married, who speak Italian. The summary of the Canadian period is positive: *I would have been able to do better had there not been so many taxes* – is Carlo's conclusion.

During this time, both spouses returned on many occasions to their land of origin: *and it is a great emotion every time* – is his thought. *I returned about fifteen times to Capodistria and every time I am moved* – is hers. *I would not be able to go back because it isn't the same thing, but it is my land, my heart has remained there. You know what an impression it is, to see my house so dilapidated! When we went away, it had just been painted. Useless, I was born an Istrian and I will die an Istrian, even if I have spent more years here than over there; the heart always beats there.*

DARIO AND CLARA ZANINI

It is thanks to the support of this warm and friendly hospitable couple, that it has been possible to meet the protagonists of the stories collected in Ottawa and summarized in the previous pages, even managing to reconcile the little time available to the writer with her desire to get to know that splendid city, in which Dario Zanini is the President of the Julian-Dalmatian Club.

A journey of life filled of surprises is the one of Zanini, born in 1935 at Visignano d'Istria. They were three siblings. His father, a farmer, above all produced grapes, from which he obtained a much requested and appreciated wine. Though a small toddler at the time of the world war, Dario has many memories of it: *the small war vegetable garden*, the songs, the small letters that the students at school would write to the soldiers at the front. In 1943, due to wartime events, the school stopped

operating: *I exulted, but for a short while, because they immediately sent me for lessons to the priest in town* – he tells. It was an ugly period, because the people found themselves balancing their own lives on top of a ridge, in the midst of furious clashes between opposing factions. In their recklessness, the children collected bombs and ammunition which were left on the ground.

With the end of the war and having signed the option to remain Italian, on the 13th January, 1948, his family left for Trieste: furniture stored at the port, people housed in the silos, the canteen in via Gambini. In order to be able to work, the certification of residence was important, which was not easy to obtain. His father went to work at the port; Dario, after middle school at first worked in a small group which cleaned out the railway carriages, then he improvised himself as an insurance agent, but the total lack of experience and the young age certainly did not work in his favour. During his free time he would attend the youth centre of the *Opera Figli del Popolo* – in



The childhood of Dario Zanini, with his siblings at Visignano d'Istria

via Duca d'Aosta 10, he specifies – where he had a way of dedicating himself to his hobbies: from sports activities to photography, to model airplanes. *They would take us on holiday to Rigolato, even during the winter: so I learned how to ski* – he tells. His encounter with Monsignor Marzari, whom he remembers with affectionate esteem dates back to that time.

He joined the Parachutists' Association: his group was aggregated to the 71st Corps of the Firefighters of Milan and in 1951 he was amongst the rescuers sent to Polesine to help the populations hit by the flood. A passion, the one for parachuting, which was confirmed during military service, during the course of which he even acquired the specialization as a mechanic and became a driving instructor. He even joined the rugby team, not only out of a passion for sports, but even due to the more substantial food and the possibility of acceding to a daily shower.

Contemporarily in Trieste his father, though having become an assignee of an apartment in the area of Santa Maria Maddalena Inferiore, tried to remedy the disappointment of no longer having been able to go back to his Istria: *the farther it is, the better* – he decided. And with his wife and the other two children, he left for Canada. From beyond the ocean he managed to convince Dario to reach them. 25 years old, a spirit of adventure, the usual thought of making a bit of a fortune and returning: *why not? I thought to myself. So in August 1960, having abandoned the potential career, I boarded the ship Saturnia* – he tells today, asking himself a bit in the meantime how a different choice would have marked his existential journey. The encounter aboard the ship with Luigi Ferrari – a well-off friend of his from Milan, heading to Chicago for his father's company – contributed towards transforming the trip into a cruise: *at every port of call we got off and went around in a taxi. In Patrasco we rented a convertible car and visited various wine bars. In one of them we found barrels made in Trieste. It was a good life all the way to Halifax, where it seemed to me that the sky was changing its colour: it was of a too clear blue, practically grey. Even the sea had a different colour; it was not blue like ours* – he recalls. He shocked customs both due to his 25 pairs of shoes in the suitcase, ordered by the family, and for the 1,200 dollars that he declared having on himself. *But what are you coming to do in Canada?* – was the officer's question. The request for footwear was not determined by frivolity: *here, in those days, dressing oneself was a problem. There was no choice. You found white socks, black pants (also rather short), boots. The only colour for items of clothing was black or blue* – he lists.

By the way he remembers the different style of living in Canada, which our emigrants then found: *healthcare was a disaster, one had to pay for everything out of his own pocket. There was no union protection. And then the city was dull: on Sundays,*

cinemas and bars were closed. In order to buy a case of beer to take home, a form had to be filled out in the government beer stores with a person's own details. As a pastime there was soccer, bowling, billiards, where only non-alcoholic beverages were allowed. Dance parties were on Saturday nights. Relations with the natives were not easy, as they were more introverted as compared to us, the extroverts. Once having overcome the mistrust they would then open themselves up, but it was not easy. The changes for the better, generally began in the middle of the 1960s.

As for changes in Dario's life, after landing in Canada and joining his family members in Chatham, his first task was to look after a pigsty. He would go home, continuing to feel wrapped up in the stench of his workplace. A big wooden tub – similar to the ones seen many times in the Far West films – was the bathtub that he could use: *I would remain immersed for a long time, but it seemed to me that the smell would never go away* – he smiles. In search of work, moving to Sudbury – the mineral producing area already mentioned in previous stories – he shared with other unemployed people even a 500 metre long queue. The aspirants would be weighed in order to check the required weight, but they would above all be selected on the basis of surnames: the preferred ones were of an Anglo-Saxon origin. Zanini was not hired. A Friulian called him to his construction company as a truck driver, transporting the teams of workers to the various construction sites, which had opened up in the city. Moving to Toronto, after various and disparate jobs he was hired by



October 1946 at Maio Grande di Parenzo: Clara (third from the right) in Grade 1

Ford, where they were looking for experts in the assembly sector, with references: his credentials were signed by fellow townsmen originally from Montona, owners of a glass manufacturing factory. He worked in that establishment for 36 years, reaching the qualification of inspector, responsible for the basic preparation of 22 kinds of different sectors.

The conquered economic stability, in 1965 allowed him to take Clara to the altar. He had met her in Chatham, in the big Istrian community which was expanding.

Born in Maio Grande di Parenzo in 1940, Clara Dobrovich keeps memories of her early infancy, stained by various sensations of fear: due to the airplanes flying in front of her home, the running to the bomb shelter, her father who had to hide himself, the heartbeat of her mother every time that she would hear a rifle butt knock against the gate of the home: *who had arrived? Germans, partisans, who?* They were the first to find out, as their house was the first one of the town.

At the end of the war, her parents opted for Italy, but they could not immediately leave, because Tito's regime would not allow her father – a farmer who worked in the social wine cellar – to leave. Their surname Debrevi was changed to Dobrovich, increasing furthermore the discomfort of Clara who, after having begun her education in Italian, found herself having to attend the Croatian schools in Parenzo, where she did not understand absolutely anything of what was said to her. With their home having been requisitioned, they were compelled to move to Parenzo in an apartment on the third floor, where they stayed until 1950, when they received the authorization to leave. They arrived in Trieste by steamship and settled in with an aunt at Roiano. That temporary situation lasted 9 years, until emigration to Canada was opened. *Her mother, with tears in her eyes, thought about our people whom she would never see again – is the memory of those days. She was a domestic helper, dad worked at the port. They asked me for my opinion and I answered: it can't be worse than here, let's try. ...and we left.* They left aboard the ship Vulcania. Clara knew about Canada what she had learnt at school; she put in her suitcase the real-sized rubber doll, given to her by her aunt as a gift when she was born.

It was very cold on that last day of April of 1959 when they arrived in Halifax... and then there was the bewilderment due to the impact with the new reality, intertwined with the uncertainty of tomorrow, the long trip aboard the train of desires, the small homes along the way almost buried by the snow. The arrival in Chatham was sweetened by the festive welcome of the other Istrians, who had arrived previously. The music changed on the following day, when they saw the house assigned to them in the countryside: old, dirty and crumbling, without a trace of toilets. At the request for a toilet, it was suggested that they create a partition in the stable, with an

old door. *With the help of the teacher Rossini – who acted as an interpreter – her father filed all the necessary complaints to the person in charge of the sugar factory, by whom we had been employed and who had even been on a promotional tour in Trieste. Those were not the promises.* The day after they found a team of workers in front of their house, building a cabin to be used as a toilet. At the same time even the running water was connected.

They began to work in the fields: sugar beets, tomatoes, cucumbers... *The earnings were by piecework, therefore it was a great disaster when the father, falling from the roof that he was repairing, broke his arm and a few ribs. He then had learnt to drive the tractor, while we only knew how to use the small hoe. Even if born in the countryside, it was a job that I had never done before – Clara continues.* They had managed to scrape up the money in order to reimburse the cost of their trip. *It was even enough to buy a car: it was an old 1949 Ford – she continues – but it worked very well. Dad could not drive and so I learnt how to do it. In those days, cars were not automatic, however it was not difficult to get a driving license: one would go to an authorized service station and with a 10 minute practical test, the driving license could be obtained.*

It was difficult in the beginning, however the work almost immediately produced its fruits and in 1962 they bought their first little house. *It cost 4,000 dollars, an*



Springtime of 1959: the first residence of the Dobrovich family at Fletcher (Chatham)

amount which one would laugh at today, but which back then worried mother – explains Clara. Organized in managing her everyday life with the help of a dictionary, she had even managed to find work in the city, as a seamstress in a repair shop. During the weekends she would work together with her parents in the fields. Until she got married in 1965. Dario had made the engagement ring come all the way from Italy, carefully hidden in the point of a shoe: picking up the footwear at customs, he managed to get through the check and the perplexities of the custom officer at the pick up point, explaining to him that they had been sent by an aunt, as a wedding present.

After living in Canada for 45 years, Dario still has an Italian passport. Still at the time in Chatham, I had presented myself as a parachutist in the firefighting service: I had all of the professional prerequisites, but I was not hired because I was not naturalized. The same thing happened in Sudbury. Qualified to drive any kind of vehicle, I was not hired to drive snowploughs, because I still had to wait another 5 years for my citizenship. Annoyed, I said enough is enough, so I kept my Italian passport. Perhaps I should now change, because otherwise I will not be able to vote in federal elections.

Here is the story of the poor emigrant – he concludes jokingly and explaining that the heart is there, but the family is here. His children, in fact, live in Canada: Franca, who made the Zaninis grandparents twice, and Paolo.

Vancouver... in Trieste

During the present Canadian tour, the limits of the travel program could hardly get along with the vastness of the territory, thus it was not possible for the author of this book to even reach the western area of the immense country; a country that, in order to cross it longitudinally, comprises of almost a kind of trip into time, with the passage of three time zones. A lucky combination, however, allowed the author to meet the President of the Julian-Dalmatian Association of Vancouver and her husband in Trieste.

MARIO AND GENI GALLOVICH

It could not have been any different: the first instinctive combination of Mario with the memory of Lussinpiccolo – where he was born in December of 1940 – is the one with the sea and with the sailing boat of his father, who had a passion for regattas. *I too, even if I was a little man, wanted to imitate and follow him. I would manage to go around the port, however with a rowboat* – he tells.

Unforgettable is the figure of his grandfather, whom he was very much attached to and who prematurely passed away. His father was a mechanical blacksmith. With his parents and sister, Mario lived in via Pozzo 51. The sea could be seen from the house: *I remember my mother waiting for my father to return, trying to single out his boat with a yellow sail, unfurled in the slight northern wind.* His was a life that was altogether serene, despite the time of the war, but it is known, at times infancy manages to even heal sad things a bit. Until the time he witnessed some horrors. *It was towards the end of the war. Some people had tried to escape, towards Ancona. Captured by the Yugoslavian patrol boats, they had been killed. I remember the return of those corpses in the boats; then left there, as a lesson that it could have been the end of whoever wanted to flee...* – he tells.

At the end of the war with the well-known consequences, after the recognition of the option, the Gallovichs left Lussinpiccolo in 1949, in a small boat, sufficient in any case to transport them and even some acquaintances. *I remember the lights that would flicker in the dark, as I was looking at the town I was leaving. I did not know, however, whether I realized that it was for good* – is the memory of the separation. His father took along the tools of his trade with him.

Transfers and settling in followed, as per the usual script: from the camp of Udine, they were sent to the refugee camp of Chiari, close to Brescia; accommodations in shacks, big dormitories divided by blankets... *Dad, however, was an enterprising individual and managed to make a kind of a paper ceiling, as a cover for our box.* Mario resumed attending Grade 3, at the town's school: *but the relationship with the classmates was not easy, full of prejudices with regards to us new arrivals, whom they called Slavs.*

Better times came with the hiring of his father at the Zanussi factory in Pordenone. Mario, however, animated by a spirit of adventure and by the presence of family members in Canada, upon completing his studies and after his compulsory military service, decided to try what could have happened to him beyond the Atlantic Ocean, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. It was 1965, when in Trieste he boarded the ship Cristoforo Colombo. *I should have left aboard the ship Saturnia, but just at that moment it was decommissioned. I was really upset, because it came from Lussinpiccolo and I had always heard a lot of talk about it.* He shared the cabin with an elderly Italian-American man who was returning home, rather disappointed by the behaviour of his family members whom he had visited in Turin and who had seen Uncle Sam in him.

Goodbye Italy! was Mario's first thought, landing in Halifax and realizing once and for all that a new life was beginning. The first impact with the severe treatment on the part of the officials at the Immigration Office left him quite perplexed, but in the end he climbed aboard the train that, after a trip of 3 days and 4 nights, led him to reach his family members in Vancouver. Those were really different times and the train was no longer the one of horrors described in the previous pages. Perhaps even because Mario was in the wrong class on the train. He was, in fact, calmly resting in his couchette, when he was awoken by the ticket inspector, who asked him for a supplement on the price of the ticket. In order to manage to understand each other, they wrote to each other in Latin.

Arriving at his destination, Gallovich found the city very interesting under every aspect. With regards to work however, used in Italy to working in a very well-equipped mechanical workshop, he found himself having to use very old and rudimentary tools. Having overcome the stage of inner conflict, which on the one hand pushed him to going back on his footsteps, he stayed in Vancouver, then landing in a small mechanical industry, where he worked with satisfaction for more than 20 years.

Next to him was his wife Geni Matulina, met three days after his arrival in Vancouver and the firstborn of a couple with a particularly eventful existential journey.

He was from Lussinpiccolo, she was from Fiume, her parents got married when

they were very young. The husband was a prisoner in a German concentration camp, mother Matulina wanted to follow him to Germany, working as a domestic helper, until the arrival of the Americans. Having taken refuge in Venice after the war, where Geni was born in 1946, not too long after the small family emigrated to Buenos Aires, which saw Ines, the second born, being born. Colliding with the country's economic difficulties, the young mother directly turned to Evita Peron, who intervened in her aid. The country, however, did not emit positive signs for the future, therefore the firm maternal determination managed to take the small nucleus back to Venice. *Just in time to meet up with grandparents and uncles and aunts, refugees from Fiume who were planning to leave for Canada* – is Geni's story. The Matulinas got together. While waiting to reach Bremenhaven for the boarding, there was the usual stopover period at Bagnoli – sufficient enough to give birth to Rosita - the third born of the Matulina family - in the hospital of Antwerp.

Despite such an uproar of events, it was in 1951 when they set sail for Canada. *I was very young, I spoke Spanish and not Italian, which I then learnt in Canada* – she continues. *We arrived in Alberta, at Lethbridge. The snow was higher than me, it was cold, but the memory of that time was beautiful, which saw the whole family reunited.*

The usual sequences followed: from work with the sugar beets for the women to the one on the railway for the men. In order to avoid the usual decadent shack as accommodation, mother had a beautiful house assigned to us, because everybody told it was inhabited by ghosts. *This was an excellent accommodation until spring-time, when mother decided to leave. She too, at that time, began to hear strange noises* – Geni smiles. The parents and three children arrived in Vancouver, without a destination and without a cent. Every saving had gone towards the purchase of the bus ticket. They found help with a group of fellow countrymen whom they met along the way – of the Evangelical faith – who offered them first accomodation and gave the head of the family an employment opportunity.

...and they became Canadians, without however forgetting the places of origin. *During a visit to Europe, my parents wanted to show me the school where we had been refugees at Venice, the church of Fiume where they got married, the school that dad attended in Lussinpiccolo...* - concludes Geni who, having finished school, in Vancouver worked for 25 years as a real estate agent. Two children were born of her marriage to Mario: the daughter is now 22 years old and the son is 25. *We even have a grandson and we only speak to him in Italian.*

A welcome and a goodbye blended together in Toronto in the springtime of 2004

The bond of the author with Toronto is practically a palindrome one: one can read in a verse the memory of the arrival and the trepidation of the work to be done, immediately supported by the cordial welcome of Guido Braini, the President of the Julian Dalmatian Club of Toronto; in the other one the departure, with the unforgettable experience in her mind, thanks even to the sensitive solicitude of so many new friends. Besides the dimensions which, in a happy mixture of emotions, at first sight contemporarily make the visitor curious and timid, the metropolis of Ontario is universally famous for its skyline, from which the outline of the CN Tower majestically emerges: the acronym stands for the Canadian National Tower, the slender building which with its 553.33 metres, is the tallest in the world. Initially planned as a communications tower, even for its construction, fundamental was the contribution in manpower by Italian immigrants. It is visited every year by millions of guests, fascinated by the breathtaking view which can be admired from the peak of its three level observatory. From atop one can manage to have a 360 degree view: from the skyscrapers of the centre – alternated with old buildings and harmoniously interspaced amongst the wide parks and green areas – to the islands and the beaches of that infinite stretch of water, which you have to continually remind yourself of



The famous skyline of Toronto from which the majestic profile of the CN Tower stands out

the fact that it is a lake. A sensation which even Braini feels, who from time to time likes to sit on a bench on the shore, in front of the mentioned skyline: he listens to the buzzing of the waves which ripple the lake, cherishing for a while the illusion of being on the shores of his sea.

Naturally not visible from the outside is the subterranean city and its extensive network of walkways, with which Toronto, like other Canadian cities, has organized in order to defend itself from the long winter months. Marked by multiculturalism, the neighbourhoods of the various ethnic groups in which it articulates itself even present themselves in an interesting way.

For the discovery of this splendid city, unveiling the curtain to the benefit of the person who is writing, was Guido Braini: an authentic organizational machine of her stay in Toronto, in the packed agenda of meetings set out for the many interviews, he managed to reserve a page in order to make her get to know the more particular parts of the metropolis which he lives in.

Considerable is the biographical patrimony found in Toronto: Istrian-Dalmatian, with a bit of Trieste inside.

ALDO CERLON

He was twenty years old and he had just graduated as a surveyor, when he left Dignano d'Istria, where he was born and lived with his parents and brother in a modest house, together with other family members. Many were the memories that left with him: his father's job in his foodstuffs store, his and his mother's commitment in order to allow the children to complete their studies. Aldo left a lot of friends behind in the town, with whom he had shared moments of study and leisure: *we would often go to Pola, Fasana, Peroi, the Brioni islands, which Dignano was very close to. There was even a small sports field, the cinema and the pool room. I cannot forget the market, with the local produce and the fresh fish... The change, and for the worst, made itself felt during the war. Dignano was in the middle of Germans, SS, fascists, regular soldiers, partisans, Tito's soldiers... Fortunate were those who fled from it. During the war however, it was better at Dignano than in the city: it was a rural town, where oil, vegetables, meat, wine were available...*

The postwar period brought further upheavals: while Pola was provisionally under the Allies, Dignano was under Tito's soldiers. *The record was turned over but the music was the same, with fast and violent self justice.*

The uncertain existing situation forced the Cerlon family to leave. On the 16th

April, 1947, the first to leave Pola by ship were the two sons. *Trieste, Venice, Pisa... we were looking for accommodations, which could give my brother the opportunity to finish his university studies – begun in Padova – and for me to find a job which would allow our parents to reach us. In Pisa, we lived in a room in a convent, hosted by the very nice Father Bruno Fedi, founder of the local Boys' Town. My brother worked for the Allies, I went to Rome, in search of work. Many were the contacts, but nothing positive, except: - come back tomorrow.*

In the capital city, Aldo heard of possibilities offered in Torino: in a short while and with the help of good people he managed to be hired by the Snia Viscosa, while his brother managed to reconcile work at the FIAT factory with his university studies. *Our parents joined us in 1948. An old stable transformed into accommodation finally allowed us to be together. We were lucky to have met a lot of nice people and in making good friendships.*

Notwithstanding everything, the future presented itself bleak: they decided to take a risk, by seizing the occasion to emigrate offered by the IRO. *The choice was for Canada, which did not make you perform compulsory military service or did not send you to war. And then good things were heard about it. We wanted to be sure of the choice, so I would have left alone, in order to check out the situation as well as allow my brother to reach his graduation.*

The usual procedure followed: Naples for the bureaucratic process, Bremenhaven for the boarding. *On the 1st April, 1951, I reached Halifax aboard the ship "General Henry Taylor", a military ship transformed for the transportation of emigrants beyond the ocean.*

The first stop was Quebec. The employers came to select us. They looked like doctors examining you, hoping to find a lot of calluses on the hands. I was chosen to cut down trees in the forests and to provide lumber for the paper mills. The place was close to Lake of the Woods, not far from Kenora, Ontario. I was in a team with another three Julian friends: a lawyer, one who had once studied to become a priest, a surveyor like me. It was very soon concluded that as lumberjacks we would die of hunger and so we decided to leave the beautiful scenery. They sent us to British Columbia, to work for a company connected to the CNR, the Canadian railway company.

It was hard work, poorly paid and risky. And above all in a locality, where it was not possible to learn English. They turned to one of the government offices in Vancouver and, with the help of a small grammar book, explained their case, which was understood and for which a solution was found. *We were sad to be separated. However, we kept in touch. Aldo was sent to Ocean Falls, more than 500 kilometres north of Vancouver, on the Canadian fjords, to work in a paper mill. The work was*

hard, but well paid, in an environment of nice people. In the meantime he even began the assimilation of English.

The following year his brother – who in the meantime had graduated in physics – arrived and found an adequate job in a company in Vancouver, where quite soon even Aldo was hired as a designer. A year later his parents arrived from Italy. They decided to stay in Canada: the turn had taken place. A journey tended towards continuous improvements later on took them to Toronto. His brother was joined by his fiancée from Torino and, after getting married, they moved to the United States of America. Aldo, since 1959 is married to an Istrian from Albona. They had two children, a son and a daughter - now married - who speak and understand Italian quite well.

During the years, we returned to our country on many occasions. My house was always there, but I never entered it. Everything was different. I did not know anyone, there was a different atmosphere. It is difficult to express what one feels.

Memories are not lacking, but they are very distant by now. I know that I would never go back to live there. After so many uprootings, I am happy that the roots have solidly sunken into Canada – is his conclusion.

AVE MARIA BAVCEVICH in VODOPIA

The history of her family is one of migratory pilgrimaging, which began for her parents – natives of Spalato – already after the First World War: Sebenico, Pola – in 1921 Ave Maria's birthplace – Monfalcone, where her father went to work as a night guard at the shipyards. Her mother, later a widow with four children, followed the suggestion to move to Zara – more suitable for the small family – where a few years later she remarried and had other two girls. Her weak health, upon her doctor's advice, made Ave Maria stop her studies, after the third year in secondary school. An apprentice at the tailor shop for male clothing, she met Natale, nicknamed Miro - a veteran from Africa due to bouts of malaria. He had gone to greet the owner of the tailor shop, where he had worked before leaving as a volunteer. They had just been married for two weeks when, on the 28th November, 1943, there was the second tragic bombing of Zara; *it was something tremendous, we could not stay at home, we did not know where to go, all the people poured into the countryside...* - she remembers. *The city, occupied by the Germans, had no water and as food was beginning to run out, we managed as best as we could in the countryside: a pair of shoes, a bottle, a blanket would be bartered for a bit of potatoes, vegetables or a chicken. At first we found shelter in the masiere (night time refuges in the fields, with dry walls, built in*

those days by the farmers), *then in the changing rooms of the sports field. At times we ask ourselves how we managed to survive, how we managed to get back up on our feet from the conditions that we found ourselves in. Psychologically, not only physically.*

Becoming aware of the situation which was becoming evermore dramatic and that prospects could not be seen, the two young spouses boarded the ship Sansego, together with Ave's parents and the two younger sisters. *One of my brothers – we later found – was a prisoner in England, another one was being held by Tito's partisans, while the third one was somewhere in Italy. We left, but the thought was always to return, at the end of the war...*

Before leaving, the girl had thought about going to the old Tobacco Factory, abandoned by now, in order to scrape together a bit of tobacco to be resold at their destination, but there were many who had had the same idea before her. Returning empty-handed she bumped into a German, who was transporting a bale of tobacco. Despite her mother's fears, she found the courage to ask him for a bit of it: the request found a favorable answer and, not having bags, Ave loaded the precious load into her coat, opened up as a kind of knapsack.

After a stopover at Pola, where they slept in a school, they reached Trieste, which however did not have the facilities to welcome refugees. They opted for Bergamo, where Miro knew that a fellow soldier of his - from the time in Africa – lived. He provided them with the first hospitality. The following experience was very difficult: the young couple, after a precarious settlement in the house of the Fascist Party, where it was the target of insults, stone throwing and irreverent writings on the doors by the people from the place. They had to face various employment and cohabitation problems with their employers, preferring in the end to join with their family members in the refugee camp of Cremona.

At the end of the war and having understood that the return to Zara was an unattainable dream, in 1947 they went to Belgium, to the mining area, where they remained for four years, experiencing the tragic sudden loss of their firstborn child just a few months after his birth. They returned to Italy to join up with Ave's sisters, awaiting the call from the IRO to emigrate to Australia, but due to the closures of the emigration quotas to that country, the alternative was Canada. *The past weighed upon our shoulders, it was too sad: due to everything that had happened to us, and due to the way that we had been treated. Italy did not have mercy on us, therefore we came to the conclusion that rather than being foreigners in Italy it was better to be foreigners abroad – the story continues.*

They left Bagnoli by train and arrived at the centre of Lesun, at Bremen. There was a special committee to select potential emigrants: *they would examine all of the*

men's hands in order to single out their working strength. They gave my husband the opportunity to choose amongst many jobs: on the railway, in the mines, in the fields or in the woods. He chose to go to change the railway tracks. There were other four natives of Zara with him. He left without the family; later on he would have recalled me and our little one, born in Naples. The two of us boarded the ship Anna Salen at Bremenhaven. In Halifax, I had the unpleasant surprise of not finding my trunk. The baggage was arranged in alphabetical order, but I could not find mine: due to a bureaucratic hitch, I was able to get it back only six months later. It did not contain particular mementos, because they had already been kept in my mind and in my heart, but inside was something really necessary: the child's stroller. For great part of the trip to Toronto, I spent imagining the house, which my husband had found for us. The journey was long and the assistance rather scarce.

Finally Ave was able to meet up with Miro: it was 1952 and her life in Canada was beginning. The little house that welcomed her was in the countryside, small and... almost acceptable, according to the standards back then: the bathroom was outside in the backhouse, water had to be fetched and snow had to be shovelled away, since the day after her arrival.

The attempt to resume their old trade as tailors was dashed as it was not Canadian habit to have custom made suits done. They chose to move to Toronto, where Miro for 24 years was in charge of the maintenance of the Simpson stores. His wife also worked for the same company, as a seamstress in charge of repairs.

At home, amongst them, the Vodopias always continued to speak Italian, but they spoke English with their son, so that they could improve their knowledge of the language.

The son was employed in a bank after his studies. Ave tells about him *that he speaks a bit of the dialect of Zara; we always say that he speaks like the Morlacchi (people from Morlacchia, in Dalmatia) when they began to learn to speak Italian. We took him to Zara when we first returned to our city, after 17 years. We wanted him to see where we came from. We went back a second time in 1986. But it is no longer my city, the one that we left. My home is now in Canada, which has given us the opportunity to rebuild our lives, where we are respected both as people and as citizens, Canadians and Italians. Because when they ask me where I come from, I tell them from Italy, because Zara was Italian. It is a shame that our dialect is destined to disappear with the old generation. Italian can be learned by taking a course, but the dialect of Zara, after we are gone, who will teach it?*

gk 470/71

Serial N° 178901

Issued at: Bagnoli - Italy

INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ORGANIZATION

CERTIFICATE OF IDENTITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMMIGRATION TO

1. The holder of this Certificate is the concern of International Refugee Organization.

2. This Certificate is issued by the International Refugee Organization with the approval of the Allied authorities of Occupation in Germany and Austria to Refugees and Displaced Persons recommended for emigration as it is issued without prejudice to and in no way affects the holder's nationality.

This certificate is NOT valid for travel unless it bears the signature of the I.R.O. certifying officer AND the appropriate military exit permit has been granted.

FAMILY NAME VODOPIA **CHRISTIAN NAMES** AVE MARIA

MAIDEN NAME (where applicable) BAVCEVICH

DATE OF BIRTH 30.11.21 **SEX** F **DP NO.** BO 4594

PLACE AND COUNTRY OF BIRTH FOLD (Yugoslavia)

NATIONALITY Yugoslav

OCCUPATION Seamstress

FATHER'S NAME BAVCEVICH Gualtiero

MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME TADINAC Matton

Description of Holder

Height 161 cm Weight 58 kg

Hair brown

Eyes brown

Nose regular

Shape of Face

Special Characteristics

P.N. BUREL

Emigration Officer
(Signature and Position of I.R.O. Certifying Officer)

Date 25 July 1951

Place Bagnoli Camp

Children up to 16 years accompanying holder.
(Dependents over 16 years of age must have separate documents).

NAME	SEX	PLACE AND DATE OF BIRTH
DARIO	M	NAPLES - 29.7.1951

Canada - IMMIGRANT

File No. FO 12478-12475

Application MASSIMO BERTI 81/2/144

Expiry

Valid for presentation as Canadian Part of Entry with

Notice of approval is not sent.

FOUR

Issued at NAPLES

On 14 AUGUST 1951

By M. Berti

Signature Aspt (3 persons)

100 - 14711

Identity certificate released by the IRO to Mrs. Vodopia in order to emigrate. An identity document even extended to her newborn son. The particular of the photograph even for the little one is to be noted

BENNY PECOTA

At times destiny manages to be a scornful script-writer of human existences. And at times in a paradoxical manner. Like in the case of Benny Pecota, a refugee from Zara in Toronto, interviewed in Parma, on the occasion of the 50th meeting of Italian Dalmatians.

It is with the name of Beniamino, that on the 16th January, 1932, I was registered in the book of births of Castel Venier; modern day Vinjerac, in the Channel of Morlacca, close to Zara – he introduces himself. I have been an emigrant in Canada for over fifty years.

The affection which still ties him to his native land, is still perceivable in the description of the town of his roots: *It is a small town of 120 inhabitants behind the Velebit mountains, the so-called Dinaric Alps, in the gulf which was once called the Channel of Venice, during the Austro-Hungarian era it was called the Channel of Morlacca and today it is called the Channel of Novigrad. Castel Venier bears the name of a famous Venetian admiral, settling there by building a castle for himself, from where the toponym comes. Always a town of excellent sailors, from the time of the Venetian Republic to the one of the Austro-Hungarian navy.*

Orphaned of his father at the age of two, already from his most tender infancy he found support and hospitality at Zara, at his uncle Luigi Zaric's place. He was a great nice man, at the time the director of the Austro-Hungarian mail service and a landowner, married to his mother's sister. It was with him that the young Pecota undertook the way of exile in June of 1948, after a previous vain attempt to escape from Yugoslavia a few months before. On that occasion, Benny had been captured at the border close to Sesana. He tells: *I had an Italian flag with me and a prayer entrusted to me by my uncle Gigi. I carry it with me all of these years. Almost with devotion he takes out the precious prayer card, kept since then in a very small bag made with the cloth of a pillowslip. He then continues: the Italian flag was snatched from me spitting on it. I spent six months in prison. I got typhoid, scabies, pleurisy; once released I returned to Zara and finally on the 17th June, through the option signed by uncle Gigi, I was able to come to Italy.*

After a brief period in the camp at Udine, there was the settling into the refugee camp of Servigliano, in the province of Ascoli Piceno. It was an old concentration camp still from the time of the First World War: a sequence of old numbered shacks, with a long corridor inside, a partition between two rows of rooms.

The roof was practically an optional: run down due to the years, it could not manage to live up to its functions as a covering. A hut, outside between two shacks,

was set up for use as a bath and washroom. Natural non-existent heating, common cafeteria in a big shack: *and there queuing up with the mess tin* – continues Pecota. *The food was barley coffee in the morning, pasta and beans or peas at lunch, on Sunday penne pasta with tomato sauce and a slice of boiled meat. For us, veterans from Yugoslavia and used only to polenta, it was a luxury. I however recall the response of uncle Gigi to whoever could not stop with the human vice of complaining: gentlemen what are you complaining about? We wanted the war, we waged war, we lost the war. This is the price we are paying.*

It is necessary to consider the spirit with which we faced all this: faced with the evil that we left behind us, where we were oppressed and kept quiet with the accusation of being fascists, only because we were Italians, where one could not express his own ideas, where we would be denigrated in front of everybody and where we were forced to learn Slav and Russian... Once in Italy, for us even sacrifices meant freedom. But we would not stretch out our hands asking for charity... There was hope. A hope cultivated for two years in the camp: hope for a job, for any way out. But they were the difficult years of the postwar period.

I remember that at the time we would go down to town to go to church. Those in the village were dressed up in their Sunday best, we could not afford it. I would go to the bar in order to see how Italian Christmas cake was eaten, to smell the coffee, the aroma of the pastries. I would draw relief and hope from that fragrance, which made me hope for a better tomorrow... And I found that tomorrow in Canada.

Benny Pecota undertook the way of exile for the second time: after various transfers to many refugee camps in Italy and Germany, he boarded one of the many Liberty ships built almost in assembly line during the war and subsequently used for the transportation of emigrants. *...and finally I landed in Halifax on the 11th September, 1951.*

The beginnings of the new life in Canada were not easy ones: from the mines to the forest, from the railway line to labouring in construction. Until the moments arrived of entrepreneurship and great decisions. A convinced supporter of enterprise and Italian culture, Pecota was the first to introduce the use of espresso machines in Canada, later on moving to industrial machines for butcheries.

And in that future found beyond the ocean, a few decades later there was an entirely sudden and unforeseen encounter that awaited him. Due to work related reasons, Pecota found himself at Green Bay, a small American centre in the State of Wisconsin. In a raining evening, he went into the little restaurant where he usually had supper during his trips. There were few customers. He started the conversation with the one who sat at the table next to him. He was an elderly man and introduced

himself as a retired Colonel of the United States Air Force. The conversation fell upon the war and on the missions carried out in his time in the Balkans in 1943. Benny shuddered, while he shared with his interlocutor some of the most dramatic dates kept in his memory: 2nd, 16th, 28th November – the carpet bombings of Zara. The replay of memories went back to 11 o'clock sharp on that far distant Sunday at the end of November, to the explosion which snatched his mother away from him and to the little corpses of the children torn apart, surprised by the bombs as they were playing in the public park, crushed beneath the rubble or blown to bits on the trees. The once young captain became pale. *Looking at me in the eyes he took my hand, squeezing it tightly and begging for my forgiveness* – continues Pecota's story. *I looked into his grey eyes veiled by tears, telling him that I didn't harbour rancour or hatred: it is sterile feelings that divide people. On behalf of the pain felt, I lifted up a prayer to heaven in order to obtain the strength to forgive, that it would clear up the rest of my days. The Colonel's face became serene and we parted from each other with a promise of peace. It was the late evening of the 28th November, 1986... exactly 43 years had gone by.*

His thought of reconciliation, however, has an implication of bitterness, when he considers how much the drama of Zara has remained outside of history: *Guernica, Dresden, everybody knows about those apocalyptic events. With regard to what happened in Zara, 83% destroyed by the bombardments of 1943, it is an atrocity not spoken of, over which lies a veil of silence. Perhaps in the hope that time will erase that horrible crime.*

ENNA BENATO widow HYNDS

From Quarnero to Toronto: it is the synthesis of her life, narrated with great vitality by this lively woman, born in Fiume incredibly in 1920.

Adjusting the replay of the memory to the time of her youth, she rethinks about her house in via Trento, at Cento Celle, where she lived with her three siblings, her mother and father. *He was an excellent painter, having prematurely died at the age of 62. But perhaps it was better like this. He would not have managed with the postwar shake up suffered by Fiume. He was not involved in politics, at home there was no talk of politics, however his feelings were Italian* – she explains.

Enna was 20 years old at the outbreak of the war, which wounded her carefreeness and those of her age, together they would go to dance classes at the house of teacher Ricotti and to many dancing parties. Her other memory tells about her job at

the Telephone Company, of the night blackouts, of her youthful carelessness which would make her stay at her place even during the bombardments.

In the postwar period, although the difficulties created by the new regime, her initial will was to remain in Fiume: *I wanted to stay in my home. Even my father had lived for many years under Hungary.* In order to dodge the compulsory obligation to participate in political gatherings, she accepted to attend in Zagreb a course to learn the functioning and the use of teletypewriters. *However, I was disheartened, because I saw friends and family members leaving one by one. Thus, at the moment of the options, I immediately signed my will to remain Italian. With my mother I headed towards Italy. After a night at the silos in Trieste, we were sent to the refugee camp of Frosinone. The train which we travelled on looked like a livestock transporter; we were in the utmost uncertainty and notwithstanding this, seated on the suitcases, feeling our spirits to be lighter, we allowed ourselves to laugh about it.*

She had to face the employment problem, ignoring the existence of the possibility to be rehired by the telephone company, for which she had worked during the wartime. *At the moment in which I thought about remaining in Fiume, I asked for my gratuity to the Telve – Società Telefonica delle Venezie (Telephon Company). I found out about my rights from a Fiumian colleague of mine, rehired as a director. But by now it was too late: I was already in Canada.*

She believed in the solution advertised by the Canadian envoys in the camp and accepted the IRO proposal. She, however, had to hide that her option had been accepted, because the IRO only admitted displaced people for free emigration. She left alone, as her mother – sixty-five years old – was not accepted due to the fact that she was over the age limit. This however did not worry the lady, as she had a sister at the EUR in Rome, two children in Milan and one in Fiume.

Enna too left Europe from Bremenhaven. It was 1951: 3 years since her detachment from Fiume. She crossed the Atlantic aboard the General Sturges; settled into dormitories together with other women, as a job she was entrusted with the children's cafeteria. The trip was altogether summed up as positive, in the company of friends, university students whom she had met at Bagnoli.

In proximity of Halifax, she was struck by the red-coloured sky at sunset, against which stood out the blackish trail of smoke traced by the arriving train, in order to take the emigrants to their destination. The flash of romanticism ended the moment in which they saw a beggar picking up cigarette butts. *Oh dear! This happens here too?* was her astonishment and the one of her young travelling companions. The surprises continued with the purchase of the by now famous loaf of sticky bread

and the tasting of a coffee, cordially offered upon their arrival by some volunteers, but definable only as dishwater.

The first accommodations were at St. Paul l'Eremit in Montreal, the centre already mentioned in the previous pages. *I arrived without knowing the language and with 5 dollars in my pocket* – Enna specifies. She began to work as a domestic helper with a French family and continued as a nurse with another one. Demoralized by the jobs she landed, for three years she wanted nothing else than to return to Italy, where she could have the opportunity to work for the Telephone Company of Venice. Not being able to find ways to cover the travel expenses, unprepared to deal with bureaucracy and exhorted by her mother's letters to resist, she continued her experiment of Canadian life: working in the tobacco industry, in a tailor shop, in a chocolate factory. In the end, and with satisfaction, she was hired in the offices of a clinic in Toronto, where she worked for 22 years as an interpreter.

In Canada, she had the opportunity to consolidate Fiumian friendships, some of them actually going back to her adolescent years, at the time when she went to the school of the Benedictines. Her husband, however, was Irish.

After so many years she had the opportunity to see Fiume again, together with her mother and some friends. *What emotion seeing my house again, with its pergola! I took two vine leaves, which I have kept for over 40 years, until they did not fall apart. At this point, I now feel like an adopted Canadian, but Italian in terms of homeland.*

Canada has changed a lot since my arrival, thanks also to the contribution of the Italians... one, however, always feels a bit exiled...

ERMANNIO BILUCAGLIA

It is a time of transformation the one that is relived at the first witty remarks of his story and a bit of a backward flash takes us to Pola, where Ermanno was born in 1920: in those years his father – the owner of a public vehicles service – went from a carriage drawn by two horses to a taxi; *he had two of them* – he specifies. Orphaned of his mother at the threshold of his adolescence, with his three elder brothers already autonomous in life and his father having left home, with his sister he was taken in and raised by an aunt, with a rather oppressive education. In his yearning for his own independence, in 1938 he enlisted in the Italian navy as a volunteer: *it was good, but even bad, because I did the whole war* – is his comment. After a nine month training course in fact, he waited for the completion of the construction in Trieste of the ship Vittorio Veneto, where he embarked right on the eve of the outbreak of the Second

World War. At La Spezia in 1943, after the armistice and under the control of the Allies, the ship and crew were first sent to Malta and then into the area of the Bitter Lakes, in the vicinities of the Suez: *8 months without ever getting off, until I had a way of returning to Italy with a ship which from India was taking Italian prisoners back home.* The positive note in the end, was that all the brothers managed to come out of the long wartime unscathed. As soon as he was released from National Service, in October of 1945, Ermanno returned to Pola. He met again his old friends from the time they went to school, but by now divided by opposing political ideologies: everyone trying to drag him over to their own side. Embittered, he decided to leave, probably without realizing that that it would have been the last time that he would see his native city. He joined one of his brothers in Rome and went to work in a hotel. *The implementation of the Treaty of Paris represented a moment of great suffering, because born in Pola, with a surname like mine, after 7 years of service in the Italian navy, I found myself having to opt to become an Italian. Added to everything was the fact that we had to go to sign at the Yugoslavian embassy. Having found myself with a group of some companions of misfortune, we staged a protest demonstration. The security forces that intervened, understood our situation. Having modified the directives, they then made us go to the civil registry in Rome to opt.*

Disappointed with Italy, though loving it he decided to leave. With him was his wife, a Roman girl. *We chose Canada because we saw it as a peaceful country, which offered a lot of employment opportunities. We were able to leave with the support of the IRO, because the hotel that I worked in was requisitioned by the Allies and actually housed the IRO employees. Having described my situation to them, my requisites were recognized in order to be able to leave as a refugee.* The usual legs: Bagnoli, Bremen, embarkation aboard the ship Anna Salen. It was 1951. *Upon my arrival, being a sailor, I considered Halifax to be a port like any other.*

By train they reached Ajax, a locality on the outskirts of Toronto, where they were first settled into a camp and where his wife risked her life by eating some eggs, which reacted badly with the anti-inflammatories that she was taking for a sciatic attack.

The first contact with the world of work was not the happiest: having emigrated with the qualification of a couple of domestics helpers, they were hired by a Dutch lady, who even spoke Italian. It seemed to be a positive premise, which instead turned out to be an entirely different thing: they, in fact, found themselves *suffering from hunger and being treated like second class people.* Something which required the intervention of an immigration inspector, solicited by Ermanno with the few English words that he knew. Relieved from the contract, their odyssey began again. Ermanno began to work at the King Edward as a bell boy, his wife in a factory. Later

on he found employment as an assistant buyer with a chain of big stores – the Eaton Company; he even managed to have his wife hired by the company, as a secretary. *By then we mastered a bit of the English language, by speaking with people* – he explains. *We bought our first house in 1957. With the second year, our life could have been defined as dignified.* Despite her wife's nostalgia, he chose Canada as his adoptive homeland, disappointed by the attitude assumed by Italy with regards to his own people and the people forced to go through analogous trials and tribulations. Having visited Italy on many occasions, he never went back to Pola.

They continue, however, to speak Italian in the family: even his daughter, a career woman who – though with a foreign accent – teaches it to the small Chinese girl whom she has adopted.

IDA LINI widow SCARPA

She summarizes the memory of her childhood years: sea and the summer. *I cannot manage to express everything that it meant to me. Unfortunately, we do not have it here...*

The tone of the voice is marked by a sweet nostalgia, while the look of this adorable lively woman lights itself up, who stuns the interlocutor by declaring her year of birth: 1911, in Fiume. *I first lived in via Bellaria, I think at no. 1, where there was a small house with a big garden and many chickens. Then we moved to the centre, at the start of the old city, in the house where there was the Sari pastry shop below. My father worked at the port, he had a mooring agency.*

Mrs. Ida's is a testimony of history as well as of life: born under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, she experienced the passage from Austria to D'Annunzio. *I cheered for him* – she tells. *It must have been 1920. It was a very beautiful night. Everybody was crying out Long live D'Annunzio, long live Italian Fiume. I was a child, my mother held me tightly by the hand in the midst of the huge crowd... I heard the nasal voice of the poet who recited: on this starry night... Then perhaps I don't remember the rest, however that episode remained impressed upon me...*

To the following period belongs the memory of the *5 days of Fiume, of the bombardments, of Fiume Olocausta.*

But I was still a small girl, protected in the midst of my family – she continues – *but, sticking to the family upbringing at the time, as a woman I had to help out at home and perhaps shine the shoes not only of dad, but also of my brothers.*

Having completed her studies in accountancy, at the age of 23 she married Iginio

Scarpa, he too a native of Fiume, pilot and flight instructor close to Udine. And even national champion in the one hundred metre breaststroke. They had met at the time they went to school, on the occasion of a circus show. And the memory that Ida has of their first encounter and the greeting that the boy addressed to her for her fur-clad coat moves her: *look at what a beautiful lioness!* Going back to the memory of that time, the thought returns to a nice, serene life. *Fiume was a duty-free zone: 10 eggs cost an Italian lira, sugar was cheap, alcohol at will, coffee cost very little...*

With the outbreak of the war and the start of the bombardments, Iginio chose to temporarily move his small family nucleus to Buia, in the province of Udine. *A veteran from Africa, he said to me: we lost the war, but at least I brought my skin home!* – she continues with the story. *Instead a cruel destiny made him die of cancer in September of 1946.*

Having remained at Buia looking after her parents and two small daughters – students at Loreto in the college reserved for the family members of the aviation personnel – Ida had to deal with job difficulties and with prejudices, widely existent with regards to those who had left the territory handed over to Tito: they had even made her lose her job which she had obtained at the Prefecture of Gorizia. She received a subsidy from the IRO conditioned by the emigration programme: she found herself faced with an compulsory choice between leaving and the giving up the benefit. On a November morning of 1951, on a motorcycle with a sidecar, someone accompanied her together with her two small daughters to the railway station in Gorizia: she had a trunk and 14 dollars in her pocket. She had wanted to have her parents with her, but it had not been possible: she could only think about a successive recall for them. They arrived at Bremenhaven, after a long and extenuating trip. *They made us get off the train and climb aboard a truck where they completely sprayed us with DDT*– her daughter Edda intervenes. They stayed in the German camp for about ten days, then they boarded the oil tanker Nelly. *I got worried when I found out about the small dimensions of that ship, with which we would have had to cross the ocean* – was Ida's thought. *We were housed in a nice little room with 500 people* – Edda is ironical about – *and with a strong smell of paint. After three days of stormy weather the engines stopped working: we found ourselves stationary for three days, right out in the middle of the sea. Everybody was sick and nobody was in a position to eat, even though there was a lot of food.*

It was the 17th December, 1951, when they set foot at Pier 21 in Halifax. After the cold suffered during the long wait in order to disembark, the lady relaxed at the welcoming warmth which wrapped her up inside the Sea Terminal. The first settling in was in the camp of Ajax, close to Toronto, where they received the support of an

Irish priest, who studied Italian. The priest found them sublet accommodation with a lady of Sicilian origins; he even anticipated the rent for the first month. He had Ida and her eldest daughter hired in the tailoring shop of a military factory, while Edda – just thirteen years old – after having looked after a lady in post-surgery convalescence for a few months, went to work in a shoe factory, continuing her studies at evening courses. *I had looked at Canada thinking about America – interpreted as the USA. And then it was so close by – she explains her thought back then. At that age I thought that everything was nice. I had a will to live, to discover. The only problem for a while was the language and getting around by bus. Over all, however, I assimilated well. What I missed were the mountains, the changing of the seasons, which in Italy is much nicer.*



Ida Lini Scarpa with her two small daughters before leaving Fiume

The times were not easy: there were economic difficulties and Ida even had to send some money to her parents overseas. Until, having learnt English well and having recovered her old accountancy diploma, she found a job at the provincial Government Offices. *It's a pity that the solution arrived too late. I liked my work and I felt a great regret when in accordance with the dispositions of the law, I had to retire at the age of 65.*

Hers was a long existential journey in Canada, a reality which she appreciates a lot: *I thank heaven for having sent us here. Our first friends were the Zancolas, refugees from Umago whom I had met back at Ajax however; besides our fellow townspeople, in these years I had an opportunity to start many friendships amongst the Canadians. The respect should be highlighted with which interpersonal relationships are marked here, even in professional life.*

In Canada, the Lini family had the opportunity to reunite itself throughout the years, with the arrival of the parents and the brother of Ida with his wife; unfortunately he passed away few months before the start of the present series of interviews. Alceo was known by the author of this book for professional reasons only via e-mail and by phone, appreciating his kindness and availability: a nice person to whom to address a thought of appreciation and memory.

LUCIANO AND ANITA SUSAN

Two of Luciano's great passions have remained on the shore of the Quarnero: Fiume, where he was born in 1920 and the dream of a career as a soccer player. *I remember everything about my Fiume, where I was born in the Agostiniani house, in the old city. In love with all sports, ever since I was a kid I would play soccer; my team was Eneo – the name of the river that divided Italy from Croatia – he starts. Together with him was Alceo Lini, remembered in the previous lines and a great friend of his. In his native city he had even been trained with Ezio Loik – mentioned in the encounter with Dino Rocco in Hamilton – before the champion played for the Grande Torino soccer team. There were the basis for the realization of Luciano's dream, but they were shattered due to a terrible knee injury. Called to the navy in 1940, the 8th September, 1943, caught him by surprise in Pola: *Italy had abandoned us, the Germans – if they ever found us – would have taken us to Germany. I fled, crossing all Istria on foot, for six days – he recalls. I was able to dress up in plain clothes, thanks to a pair of pants and a shirt, received from the uncle and aunt of a friend. I did not have anything to eat nor money – the story continues. I think I must**

have been the first prisoner of the Istrian partisans. Blocked about 10 kilometres from Pola, he gave reasons for his escape to avoid risking of being captured by the Germans. Held for a few days, he later headed towards Fiume, through the woods, motivated by the desire of hugging his mother once again, whom he had not seen for three years and whom he knew was in difficult economic conditions. He remained in his city until the 7th February, 1947 – practically the eve of the ratification of the Treaty of Paris – when he chose to escape towards Trieste, where his fiancée, Anita Cossich, would have caught up with him later on. She too was from Fiume, in the city of the Quarnero region she had lived in via Ciotta. Still a girl orphaned of her father – a charcoal dealer in via Pomerio – she recalls the consequent sacrifices which her mother had been forced to make: *all of her dowry had wound up at the Monte di Pietà (pawn shop run by the Government Bank) and she never had enough money to pawn it out. I recall the last episode, when she pawned the towels.* In order to allow her mother to work, with her brother and sister she was raised by an aunt of hers in Pola, where later on she met Luciano. In order to join him, she did not hesitate to be a protagonist of a particularly adventurous escape towards Trieste: on an uncovered truck, hidden in a rolled up mattress, among the furniture, during an expatriation to Italy. At the border, in order to throw off the suspicions of the border militiaman intent on verifying the load, the drivers took him to drink a beer. Providential was the summer storm which came in the meantime, which accelerated the exit formalities, thus avoiding the young lady of being caught. Anita's heart went from the palpitations of fear to somersaults of joy underneath her light shirt, which the rainwater had made to stick to her body. Her hands over her breasts helped her to overcome the embarrassment caused by the unforeseen transparency of the fabric.

Once having met up, after the registration at the IRO offices, the couple headed to Rome, where the young woman found hospitality with the Centenari family, her former employers in Fiume, where they had a pastry shop. Luciano, in search of work, stayed at the Termini train station. *Without any help, I filed an expatriation request at all the consulates in the capital city. On the way to emigrating to Sweden, during a stopover in Torino I met some old Fiumian friends and decided to stay with them: for the first time I entered a refugee camp.* Having settled in the Casermette San Paolo, he was joined by Anita, whom he married on the 29th June, 1948. She worked as a cashier at the grocery store in the area, he at the SIO – Italian Oxygen Company. Within the camp, they were assigned a small room with two bathrooms, which Luciano managed on his own to transform into an acceptable bedroom and kitchen. For the eliminated bathrooms, they would use the common ones. Having purchased a Lambretta, they began to enjoy their free time. Letters, however, even

began to arrive from the mother and brother of Anita who, after various escape attempts, had managed to leave Fiume, reaching Canada. The many solicitations to join them convinced the young couple to cross the ocean: Torino – Bagnoli – Bremenhaven. On the 21st October, 1951, the Canadian chapter of their lives began. They reached their family members in Port Arthur, where mother Cossich peeled potatoes and carrots in the kitchen of a Chinese restaurant, while her son had found a job as a mechanic. The great cold weather tempted them to take the return road. Before giving up however, they cast their eyes upon the employment opportunities of Toronto: Luciano was hired as a specialized mechanic at British American Oil, where with great satisfaction he worked for thirty years. Thanks to the experience in the pastry sector by Anita, they opened up a pastry shop-bakery. Good were the results, but considerable was the commitment required, thus Luciano, who liked to spend the weekends skying or boating – according to the seasons – preferred to sell the business. Having found their way, soon they were able to buy a beautiful house, while their family got bigger with the birth of two daughters.

One of them – irony of fate – during one of the Susans' return to Fiume, met at Abbazia the one who would later become her husband: Florentine by birth, but the son of a Fiumian refugee – Mr. Pasquali, once the owner of a fabric store. They now live in Florence, where she works as an interpreter at Gucci and where their two male children were born. Her sister instead is married in Canada and her children only understand a few words of Italian.

We have seen Fiume again many times – concludes Anita. I have learnt to recognize its old buildings, the beautiful streets, the sea. When I was young I would not care about these things, while now I look at them with other eyes. It's a shame, however, that the people do not speak our language.

Sweet memories aside, Luciano and Anita would never leave Canada, where they live well and where they have a lot of good friends, with whom they have shared a long journey.

Luciano enjoys writing Fiumian stories in the Fiumian dialect: he even did so on the occasion of the passing away of Alceo, his long time friend.

SERGIO AND ANITA GOTTARDI

Mine is an ancient Fiumian family, of distant Trentine origins – is Sergio's introduction as he tells the story of his life journey. For a few generations in Budapest, right from the 1700s it had fixed its abode in the Quarnerian capital city. My father

Bruno Leo Gottardi, born in 1888 under Hungary, had studied at the Italian language Hungarian secondary school. It was a historical memory of Fiume: he told of how Fiume had suffered in order to remain Italian and had managed thanks to the Hungarian protection... My mother, Anna Carl, was instead of Swiss origin.

In Fiume, where he was born in 1923 and where he had graduated from the Dante Alighieri classical secondary school in via Pascoli, Sergio – then called Mimmo by his friends – lived with his parents and three siblings close to the port, in a condominium at number 5 in via Noferi. They ran a small money exchange and stamp collectors shop, open even during the wartime years: *my father was too old back then and I was too young, to be enlisted* – he comments.

My most beautiful memory of Fiume however, remains tied to the rowing boat association – he highlights, tuning the tone of enthusiasm to the one of regret: *the sailing boats, the dinghies, the bicycles, the girls...* In love with the sea, on the 15th June, 1943, he won the regatta of the traditional festivity of Saints Vito and Modestus, patron saints of Fiume, which would have been the last one. The prize consisted of a permanent cup, where every year the name of the winner would be added on. A few months later, his *rowing boat association* – the Eneo nautical society – was destroyed by a bomb. *That bomb shattered my world: one would walk on pieces of wood, the boat warehouse no longer existed, the port was completely upside down. A crane falling into the sea, had destroyed the little boats beneath* – he sighs. *However, we managed to save four or five canoes, because we had put them away before the incursions had begun. And so at the end of the bombing, in order to exorcize what had happened we recovered them and set them out to sea, rowing once again.*

The time of the war ended, leaving its mark upon the Gottardi family: a son had died in 1944, the father passed away the following year. *On the 1st May, 1945, Tito's troops entered to occupy the city, in procision, with cows and violins* – Sergio continues. *We went through many experiences, we'll even get through this one, we thought. We thought that we could overcome the degradation of those moments and be able to remain in our city, which throughout its history had seen the passing through of Austrians, Hungarians, Italians, Germans. Despite all the intentions of wanting to manage to face those sufferings, while awaiting future solutions, I instead found myself wanting to escape: against every international and UN law, I was, in fact, summoned for compulsory military service. It was an illegal act, they did not have any reason to summon me for compulsory military service: nothing had been defined yet and two years were still missing for the sealing of the clauses of the Treaty of Paris.*

Having obtained a temporary expatriation permit for reasons of work and having put the bicycle on the train, Sergio reached then provisional border; then pedalling, from Basovizza he reached Trieste. *Ah!!!* – he renews his breath of freedom. The first thing that he did was to reach one of the nautical associations, where he presented himself as a “colleague”. They took him out to sea aboard a canoe. It was the first time that he saw Trieste, and the frame was quite special: *ah! what a city! And then the lighthouse, the smell of the sea... What a sensation of happiness! Almost a mystical relationship with Heaven.*

With the options having entered into force, a few years later his mother and brother were able to reach him in Trieste. They resided with family members in via Galleria and in the meantime they resumed their stamp collecting business in a shop in via Pellico, which shortly after, had to close down due to the economic crisis. It was 1951. Sergio decided to emigrate: USA and New Zealand had already filled up their quotas; he was refused entry into Australia, *because I did not have labourer's hands*. So in September, with the usual IRO procedures, he left for Canada. Among the interviewees, he is the one of the few to talk about the camp of Bremenhaven in a positive way. *It was well-organized and I was even able to attend an English course* – he explains. *I was subsequently transferred to Copenhagen, where I boarded the Monteverde: it was a ship made for the transportation of troops, so we slept in the hold, very close to the deafening sound of the anchors' chains*. Even if before leaving Trieste he had gone to the Civic Library in order to do a bit of research on Canada, many remained the questions which accompanied him during the trip. *I was in any case aware that I was making a clear cut with my past*. Among his luggage – a suitcase and a chest brought by his father when he returned from the Great War – were above all winter clothing.

He thought positively after landing in Quebec City, setting off on his first working experience: for the railway company, he had to change the railway wooden beams. They lived in railway carriages, turned into living quarters for the labourers. There were 80 labourers in every team. *We would go around in groups* – explains Gottardi who, *after 6 months of hoe and shovel*, he was hired by a cleaning company in Toronto. *I lived in a furnished room and I would sing ramazzar, ramazzar, che ti possano ammazzar* – he tells singing the nursery rhyme. *I can summarize that period by work, work and more work*. And then evening classes, with courses in Canadian literature, history and geography, besides perfecting his English – already at a good level, having attended English classes at the Berlitz School in Trieste. He got through the hardship of that period with an optimistic vision of his journey: *the situation was in continuous progress towards a positive goal*. Having gone over to

work in a telephone company, he got news about the positive outcome of the recall request – filed immediately after his arrival in Canada – in order to have his fiancée, Anita Zorovich, to join him: they got married upon her arrival, in 1953. *I had prepared a small nice apartment for her, perfect for a wife* – he proudly smiles. Having overcome the first understandable moments of nostalgia due to the family left behind in Trieste and due to the detachment from the habits acquired in the native city, the lady magnificently blended into the new reality, in which she worked for more than 22 years as a seamstress and stylist.

After a lively succession of jobs of a technical character, a decisive step in Sergio's career was the management of the advertising for various newspapers. He began



Having quite early landed into a good professional career, in 1953 Sergio Gottardi was joined by his fiancée Anita, whom he married upon her arrival in Toronto

with the *Corriere Canadese*, which gave him the opportunity to carry out a meeting of the Julian-Dalmatian exiles of Toronto. He placed an announcement in which he invited his fellow countrymen to meet at his home at two o'clock in the afternoon the following Sunday. *It was the first attempt at founding a club – he tells. Other meetings followed; we would sing Va' pensiero... However, quite soon, arguments broke out between Slavs, Italians, fascists, communists: instead of talking about the future, we would always go further back into the past. And I did not like this. Then I tried to set up a headquarter – the room of a restaurant or a library – but there was neither cooperation nor the will to form this club. I got fed up: I had new jobs that had to be set up and other commitments to follow, and everything went up in smoke. The only one who had remained faithful to the idea was Carlo Milessa, who with great patience managed to fulfil the project a few years later.*

The advertising sector in the meantime had made to mature in Gottardi a considerable experience in the cataloguing of materials and the reproduction of plates, necessary to print: it was the basis for the future success. *That was my most satisfying period, in which I learnt a lot, by developing my independence – he rightly and proudly specifies. I did not reach the degree of director, however I managed almost a million dollars annually, between sales and purchases of spare parts.*

Such a pace of work took away his free time, making him put aside rowing. Later on he signed up with a sailing club: *and there my heart opened up. Lake Ontario was really a consolation: the Gulf of Quarnero had a lot of dead calms, good for canoeing but not for sailing. Instead here there is always a considerable and constant breeze... The fact that there is fresh water did not disturb me at all: with my sailing boat in the middle of the lake, with my fantasy I would see Monte Maggiore...*

...which instead he never saw again in reality, as he never went back to Fiume. The lively tone of the narrative is interrupted by a moving silence to the question about an eventual return: and it is the most significant response.

He is now a citizen of the Free Municipality of Fiume in Exile, which has its headquarter in Padova. He sends his vote in by mail.

CARLO MILESSA

In Fiume – where he was born in via Marsecchia in October of 1934 – he could not have imagined that, many years later, his life would have crossed paths in Canada with the one of the protagonist of the previous story.

He was a child when, after the declaration of war upon Yugoslavia by Mussolini,

his city was evacuated. *At least a hundred buses were brought in from every part of Italy in order to allow the civilian population to evacuate. Dad stayed behind in Fiume, recruited in the defence; with the rest of the family I was taken to Istria, to my mother's town, Valdarsa* – Carlo recalls. In those vicinities as a child he would have fun going to throw stones into a foiba, so deep as to not hear the stones knock against the bottom of the abyss: *it seemed to me as if the stone disappeared in thin air* – are his words. A bitter farce, right in that abyss a tragedy would have taken place a few years later, which would have directly touched his family. *It was 1945. Having seen some of Tito's partisans push a group of prisoners in the direction of the foibe, one of my mother's cousins tried to stop them, highlighting that the war was over. Accused of being a fascist, she too was stopped. The same fate for her husband, who intervened in her defence. We never saw them again* – overwhelmed by emotion, he interrupts his story for a while. In the regime of prevailing fear, the news spread almost whispered by witnesses of the fact and reached the Milessas taken by some family members to Fiume, where they had already returned in 1941, a few weeks after the displacement. At that time there had been the festivity *of the gift*, in order to fulfil a vow of thanksgiving because the city had then come out unscathed from the artillery attacks. *Especially the youngsters opened up their piggy banks and so since 1942, while the Americans were bombing, we were building a church: years later, my brother got married in it* – he continues.

In 1944, his father had been picked up by the Germans for the compulsory service of the TOT, a brother of his was a prisoner in England, another one worked at the torpedo factory in Fiume Veneto, another one still was in Venice with the Battaglione San Marco. His two sisters were safe in Bergamo at the house of friends: *out of the 9 of us only 3 were left* – is his consideration. At the end of the war in fact, Carlo found himself all alone in the family house in Fiume, with his mother and grandmother. A group of partisans showed up hunting for fascists. The readiness of his mother's spirit saved the situation. *As is known, a popular saying said that the most ignorant Fiumian knew how to speak three languages: in fact, my father knew 4 and my mother knew 3* – he tells. So to the head of the formation, who in Croatian had asked her if there were any fascists around, the woman – in the same language – in order to deviate his question, she asked him who would look after the expense for repairing the kitchen ceiling, damaged by the bombardments. At the same time she even offered them some water, explaining to them that there was no wine. Taken by surprise, the leader went away with his group, promising her a new house and avoiding a search, which would have instead turned out to be as dangerous as ever, with the photographs of her children in Italian army uniforms, kept in the drawers.

With the family having reunited itself after the hard wartime trials, all of a sudden the father passed away, due to a brain haemorrhage: *there was no room at the hospital, so he was admitted to the psychiatric hospital*. It was 1948. Having chosen the way of the option and of exile, fragmented in the middle of many trials and tribulations, the Milessa family reached Italy: the two sisters settled in with an aunt in Trieste, where one of the girls later married an American of the Allied Military Government; Carlo at first continued with his studies at a college in Grado and then in Brindisi; the other members were housed in the refugee camp of Latina. An economic solution in that period for his mother was the sale of the furniture which she had managed to take along with her during the exodus. It was, however, a solution in order to survive, not in order to continue to live. In 1952, with the decision to leave for Canada, the Milessas began a new chapter in their lives. *Crossing the Atlantic Ocean we no longer thought about the past, but looked towards the future*. With a witty remark, we can say that the first sip of that tomorrow had the taste of a Pepsi Cola, tasted by Carlo upon landing in Halifax. The journey which followed was particularly kaleidoscopic, with spaced out departures, encounters followed by separations between the various members of the family, occupational alternations and consequent transfers from one Canadian territory to the next: Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, where in 1954 there was the possibility to make a down payment for the purchase of the first house. From time to time Carlo is found chopping wood, working on the dirt road, shovelling snow. Finally in 1957, with the acquisition of Canadian citizenship, he was permanently hired by the Customs Offices. Bitter sweet is the parallel situation for his three brothers' naturalization request. All of them born in Fiume – each one however under a different domination – they bore different nationalities on the documents: Mario was Hungarian – born in fact at the time of Hungary; Claudio was Yugoslavian – arriving in Canada with the IRO as a displaced person; Carlo was Italian – having arrived with an Italian passport.

The first vain attempt to set up a Julian-Dalmatian Association, already remembered by Sergio Gottardi, belongs to that period. *But during that period we were too busy with two or three jobs to pay off the mortgage for the house* – explains Milessa. *I managed with a second attempt about ten years later, by contacting everybody by phone. I chose the Royal York Hotel for the first meeting and a date that sounded important to me, the one of the solar eclipse: Sunday, the 22nd September, 1968*. He never returned to Fiume again, because he prefers to remember it as it was, with a beautiful, multiethnic and multi-religious society, destroyed by the Second World War. *A fruit of the law of 1776 by Maria Teresa, who looked at the city as the port of Hungary, it had been a very lively economic and commercial reality, where people*

coming from all over the Austro-Hungarian Empire could find work, by becoming Fiumians and learning our dialect – he highlights.

Many souls now live in Carlo Milessa, who feels without a doubt Fiumian and Julian-Dalmatian; but even Italian – director of the Italian-Canadian Congress which gathers together all of the Italian associations of Toronto; and even Canadian, director of the Federcalcio of Toronto.

NERINO GHERMEK

Something beautiful which I can never have back – his memory of Fiume comes out with a sigh, where he was born in 1923. The beautiful thing was that we did not have anything and we dreamt of having a cioccolatino (chocolate morsel), today we have a chocolate factory and we are not happy – is his reflection.

He lived with his mother in the old city, together with his brother, who died prematurely, and his sister, 14 years older than him. *In love with the sea, my second home was the Bagno Quarnero. I was the only one who dared to dive from the top of the 30 metre high lighthouse on the long pier, on the side of the caves...*

Lively and not a daddy's boy, he had certainly not planned his future: at the age of 13 he began to work as a delivery boy at the Lazarich pastry shop, in via Canapini. Free-spirited, with an existence lived a bit day by day, due to various circumstances he managed to dodge the obstacles of the war. Having, however, found out that the Treaty of Paris assigned Fiume to Yugoslavia, he had no doubts and immediately decided to opt to keep his Italianness. He left in 1948. *The following pilgrimage through Italy took me from Trieste to Udine, from Chiavari to Rome, to Milan. Various were the occupational vicissitudes, but I often had to above all face the bitterness of not being considered Italian by my interlocutors hot, even the institutional ones – he tells. It happened at the Ministry of the Merchant Navy, where they treated me badly due to my origin; it happened again when the so-called Fanfani houses were to be assigned, 6% of them reserved for the war veterans and similar categories. They told me that they were only reserved for Italians.*

Having married a girl from a well-off family and become the father of a girl, although he had a good job at the Chianti Ruffino, due to the disappointments connected to his status as a refugee, he asked his eldest sister – having already emigrated to Canada with her husband and three children – to recall him. He left alone, on the 8th September, 1954, from Le Havre. His wife and daughter joined him later on in Toronto, where after the usual alternative employments in different sectors, he

reached a satisfying position in the construction sector, specializing himself in the preparation of concrete: *in fact, I'm the one who did the concrete work at the old airport of Toronto* – he specifies. For the same company, he later on went to work as a driver. *Overall it was a satisfying job, with a good pay which allowed me to have long holidays in the sun.*

The father of two daughters and grandfather of 4 grandchildren, he now feels Canadian, even if the Fiume of his youth stays in his mind. He saw it for the first time in 1968: his house had been demolished, the Bagno Quarnero disappeared. *But the lighthouse is always there...*

MARIA LUISA BRENTIN in BONGIOVANNI

...Dinora for her friends – she specifies smilingly, remembering the first care-free years of her childhood in Fiume, where she was born in 1930: *I lived in via Buonarroti, in the area which they called Belvedere, from where one would climb up to the church of Cosala. It was a nice apartment, which faced the soccer field, where they would even stage parades and gymnastic events. One lived well in Fiume. Dad worked at the General Warehouses. I was an only child and well loved. Ugly instead was the time of the war. They even made us evacuate to Abbazia: the Shipyards, the Torpedo factory, the port were mined, the Germans had requisitioned the local hotels in order to host the displaced Fiumians... Many are the wartime events which I have erased from my memory, probably due to a psychological fact* – is Dinora's consideration. She remembers, however, the trips from Fiume towards Pirano, aboard overcrowded trains, in order to barter a bit of gold or some clothes for potatoes, flour and polenta. The convoys would often be a target for bombs or machineguns, which forced the passengers to jump out of the carriages quickly. *In Fiume, on one hand the Americans would bomb us, on the other there were the Germans, who had even seized my room as a control observatory from atop the hill...* she continues. *Many were the nights spent in the air raid shelters, in the dark, with dripping water, a few candles in order to provide a bit of light...* Adolescent Dinora was shaken the time in which, at the exit from the air raid shelter she bumped into the tricycles of the UNPA (National Anti-aircraft Protection Union – made up of the elderly who were exonerated from military service), which on the back platforms transported the dismembered corpses of the victims of the incursions. Even her school, the Brentari School, was irremediably struck.

Having shelved the plan to sign up for teachers' college, in the postwar period she began to work at the pay office of the Quarnero Shipyards, where she was even recruited as a basketball player. *The system favoured whoever distinguished himself in sports, even easing the possibility for work – she explains. They moved me to the General Warehouses, however during my lunch break I was forced to learn Croatian. The commitment was even added at the end of the working day, to work on road maintenance. These restrictions on our freedom led us to the determination to leave. Fiume was emptying itself more and more everyday.* One evening, the family – already about to leave – at supper time received the unexpected visit from OZNA, Tito's political police: they requisitioned Dinora's new bicycle and the stove, which had been recently bought. One can imagine her parents' astonishment, when they discovered that the architect of the manoeuvre had been mother Brentin's brother, in order to gain possession of the confiscated goods. A bitter surprise, which reconfirmed a few days later the lifestyle of the family member: they, in fact, found him as an employee at the options office, where they had gone in order to sign their option to remain Italian citizens, which would have definitively distanced them from Fiume.

After a month in a centre in Venice, they found accommodations in Chiavari, at the Faro holiday camp for children: *I was astonished upon arrival, when we were given big sacks to be filled up with straw, in order to prepare our beds – Dinora continues. We were all together, about seventy people, in the hall of an old dining room.* As the girl had a serious form of pleury, neglected by the sports doctor during the time she played basketball, the family was advised by the doctor to move up into the hills. *We were so poor, we did not even have stockings to go to church – continues the story. In order to move we used the money paid to us for the relinquishing of tenancy rights given to whoever would leave the refugee camp.* The stay on the Ligurian hills lasted seven years, during which the Brentin father began to work aboard a passenger ship. Dinora, having married one of her father's colleagues – he too a refugee from Fiume – became the mother of a boy: hoping for a better future, with her husband she joined her parents-in-law in Canada. After a difficult period at Port Arthur, now Thunder Bay, where there were more or less working opportunities only for lumberjacks, after a year they moved to Toronto: it was 1954. The beginnings were uphill: from washing dishes to a waitress to a sales clerk in a big store. Until she replied to an advertisement in the newspaper: Dinora found the final satisfying occupation at the Royal Bank, where she worked for 31 years. At the same time, she was active in the Julian-Dalmatian Association.

The first return to Fiume took place after 25 years: her heart always remained there, even if now she feels much more calm in her feeling of nostalgia. *I suffered*

quite a lot missing my sea; not to mention the general confusion that was created about my birthplace, frequently defined as Yugoslavia.

At the moment of the interview she had celebrated the 37th anniversary of her second marriage and told how, even though often in Italy she visits the Sicilian family members of her husband, she would have never abandoned her life in Canada. *The deepest roots are obviously Istrian, but the umbilical cord is to be severed* – she concludes.

Her parents, who joined her after three years since her arrival, they too found an adequate reply in their land of adoption: now they rest on Canadian soil.

In the evocative extent of Toronto, a fortuitous casualty reserves the surprise of finding some Canadian stories, having left Trieste in the 1950s.

ETTORE AND LUCIANA MEDEOT

Ettore, a native of Mossa, in the province of Gorizia, where he was born in 1924, during the postwar period moved to Trieste, joining the Civil Police Force. At the expiry of the Allied Military Government – which had created the Civil Police Force – he moved to England, from where in 1955 he left for Canada. His first residence was in Hamilton. The new chapter of his life did not have an easy start: *I began as a labourer, in a demolition company* – he explains. *The country was transforming itself and old buildings were being knocked down in order to make way for new ones. The work was hard, but usually it was the one that the emigrant accepted upon arriving as a first job.* After the move to Toronto, patience and capacity contributed to his improvements and his professional affirmation in the painting sector.

His young wife, whom he married by proxy, arrived in 1956. Luciana Menotto in Trieste had lived in via D'Alviano. *From our window we could see the San Marco Shipyard; how many launches I saw! I was 17 years old when I met Ettore. I had just finished my studies at the Volta School and I worked at the Mio Bar in via Carducci. After his departure, I married him by proxy in the Salesians' church* – she explains. She left Trieste aboard the ship Saturnia on a day in which the northern bora wind was blowing, a few days before Christmas of 1955. *I was 21 years old and on that quay I left a bit of my heart: family, friends, habits.* Unforgettable was the lump of emotion in her throat while the ship sailed off at the sound of the Hymn to San Giusto. Even for her, adapting to the new life was not easy: the scarce knowledge

of the language, the cold, the cohabitation in an apartment room and kitchen with another family that had different customs... *For three months I did not write back home, in order not to tell lies* – she tells. Then there was a nice friendship with a family originally from Pola, the birth of their son and the arrival from Trieste of their family members, who for a while settled in Toronto, setting up a general food store.

At a distance of half a century, in unison the Medeots speak about their experience with enthusiasm. *We could allow ourselves a good life, with nice trips and beautiful friendships. It does not matter how many years we have been here: we raised our children Italian style. ...and now even our granddaughter.*

Mrs. Luciana is still working at a restaurant complex in her capacity as a banquet organizer, coordinating a staff of 120 waitresses. Her DNA promises well: at the moment of the interview in fact, she said that in Trieste live her 93 year old mother and her 92 year old aunt, while in Melbourne resides another maternal aunt of hers who is 96 years old. *However, I miss our sea a lot! When I die, throw my ashes into the sea at Barcola.*

RICCARDO DEL CANTERO

Dynamic and with a lively personality, he is a friend of the Medeots, whom he accompanied to the interview. His story too starts in Trieste – where he was born in 1923 and where he lived in via De Amicis, a student at the Volta institute – but with rather complex itineraries. *Having obtained his civil pilot's licence in 1942 at the airport at Ronchi, in 1945 – thanks to my admittance into hospital for an attack of appendicitis – I was spared from the massacre carried out at the training officers' school at Oderzo by a formation of partisans, just before the end of the war* – is the beginning of his story. Probably, daily life and routine in those years were words not suitable to his existence, because not few were the choices which marked his life up until his arrival in Canada. Having joined in the immediate postwar period the investigative team of the civil police at the Police Headquarters of Trieste, three years later he can be found aboard the ships of the Cosulich Navigation Company, with the view of landing and remaining in New York. In the following year instead, he preferred to land in Trieste, where with an uncle he opened up a dancing café, having remained in the memory of those who at that time were of a young age: *at the Kit Kat, in the Station Square, famous bands and prestigious pianists, like Lelio Luttazzi, performed* – he explains. *I was even the first one to open up the bar at the racecourse of Montebello, in the area of the stands and of the stables, where I even*

had some horses. In 1956, considering the economic situation of the city to be a bit critical, he once again look beyond the Atlantic Ocean: he had a visa for the USA, but he preferred Canada, which he saw as a new land, in a position to offer a better future. He left aboard the ship Giulio Cesare. Having arrived in Montreal, he understood that his plan of opening up a bar restaurant would not be easy: *big difficulties, above all getting the liquor licences.* In order to begin his new life, he had to fall back working in a scrap yard. He would have immediately gone back, but he was held back by pride: he did not want to face the criticism of those whom he would have seen again in Trieste. He reached an uncle of his, who lived in Toronto and, strengthened by his passion for cars and his knowledge of the sector, he began to work as a salesman for the General Motors dealerships. It has been his profession for 33 years, except for a parenthesis in 1960, the year in which during a visit to Trieste he thought about remaining in his native city, working for an insurance company. He preferred returning to Canada where, though continuing to feel Italian, he had sank his roots. Married to an Englishwoman, who gave him a son, he is now a grandfather three times. *Trieste is always in the heart* – he concludes, but the family is here.

GIANNI AND GIOCONDA ZACCHIGNA

Their steps, set off on the same land of Istria but along parallel roads, crossed in Trieste in order to meet up in Canada.

Gianni, more bent on looking at the future rather than back of the past, has to dust away from a remote corner of his mind the memories of Zacchigni, Municipality of Umago, where he was born in 1932. The memory of his childhood years pops out amidst the darkness of the war: *life was harsh, sad, even dangerous. Fear of the fascists, the partisans. Then the Germans, the bombardments. And at the end of the war we were worse off. People disappeared: fear had only changed registry.* With the borders closed, due to the known events, he too and his mother (his father had already died a few years earlier) joined the huge mass of exiles marching towards Trieste. They arrived there in December of 1955: furniture at the silos, accommodations at the refugee camp of Padriciano. *I didn't have money, neither a job* – is his story. He too allowed himself to be conquered by the future prospects canvassed by the Canadian commission on a promotional visit to the camp. It even seemed that there was the opportunity to choose the destination. *My preference of course was for a seaside city, like Vancouver for example. They sent me to Edmonton, exactly in the opposite territory, to a farm, where I had to wake up at six o'clock in the morning*

and milk the cows – he now smiles, remembering the toil of having to wake up on time and the irritation of the farmer, when he would be late for work. *I couldn't understand his words, however I understood that he was very angry.* The most varied working experiences followed, through Ontario: from a convent of nuns, where he improvised as a cook, to the cafeteria set up in a forest for the railway workers, where he perfected his experience in the kitchen; he continued as a carpenter, arriving at the final job at the Ford plant in Toronto, where he remained until he retired, first in the receiving sector and then in maintenance.

The first return to Umago took place in 1960: though having understood that his life had by now transferred itself beyond the ocean, he felt a certain sentiment in seeing his house once again. *But the homesickness is something else* – he specifies. *It is where you leave someone behind who awaits your return with a smile. We then were forced to go away...*

His visit to family members in Trieste was the occasion in which he crossed his way with the one of the young lady, who a few years later would have become his wife: Gioconda Flego, a refugee since 1955 with her family from Capodistria, where she was born in 1941. Too young at the time to recall the memories of the war, she recalls the heavy atmosphere of anxiety and bewilderment which snaked its way into their existences: the occupation of Tito's troops, the terrorist actions with which bands of violent thugs would threateningly bang at the doors, the abuses against religious, the beating up of Bishop Santin, the vexations against the parish priest, beaten up and left wounded in a ditch... *All reasons which made us want nothing else but leave as soon as possible. We didn't feel at home.* And she reports the episodes connected to her Confirmation: *it was not possible to find a white gown in Capodistria and my aunt, after having bought the fabric in Trieste, had to hide the purchase by wrapping it around herself, in order to manage to get through customs at the border. A 9-year-old girl, I instead had the money and the confetti which my family members had given me as gifts for the occasion confiscated at the border.*

Gioconda was 14 years old when she left her land to go to Gorizia – officially a guest of her aunt – where she completed her studies in a college the following two years. She then joined her parents in Trieste, in the refugee camp of Campo Marzio, from where they were later transferred to the Emigrant's House. A printer, at first, at the Modernografica printing house in viale XX Settembre, she was working at the Smolars Company when she chose to follow her husband to Canada. She was 23 years old and the only thing she knew about Canada was that it was very cold. She had confirmation of it when she arrived there, while from the train which was taking her to Toronto she could only see snow and the railway tracks: no city could

be seen. *Where have I arrived?* – was the question that she instinctively asked herself. The first winters were not easy to face. Gioconda still remembers February of 1966, while she was about to give birth to her first child: *my neighbour had to dig through the wall of snow which had piled up between our houses, in order to be able to reach me.* The encounter with the new reality, however, was perhaps a bit more morbid for her, in comparison to the earlier emigrants, as her husband had already settled down. Excellent was her bond with her neighbours and with the Italian community in general. Right from the beginning and with a lot of determination, she sought to find a job, literally sifting every employment possibility on her own. During three years, due to her linguistic disability she could do only petty jobs and far from her training; once having mastered the English language, she managed to land a job in an important company, in which she was able to resume and fulfil her professional experience as a printer. At the age of 48 she had accumulated 35 years of work: 28 in Canada and 7 in Italy.

Life in Canada was quiet, but what she still misses today is her habitat, with its feasts, its people and its traditions: the atmosphere of home in short. She returned twice to Capodistria in these years, even seeing her house once again: *I know that the new tenants have made some modifications, but I did not go in. When I then left with the steamship, it hurt me so much to see my city distance itself from my view, that I decided never to go back again.*

Of course winter here is long and it takes a 5 hour flight to find a bit of sun and sea – conclude the Zacchignas, twice having become parents and three times having become grandparents. And to think that we had our sea right in front of our house... and so beautiful!!!

IDA DERIN widow REIA
LOREDANA REIA in SEMENZIN

Mother and daughter, two voices, a family story: having developed itself in time, in places, in the number of protagonists, almost assumes the contours of a saga. It begins even before the First World War, when in Carcase – close to Capodistria – Ida Derin was born in September of 1912. *It has a very beautiful church, famous for its nativity scene, which everybody goes to admire* – is the proud description of her native town. Almost ninety-two years old at the time of the interview, Mrs. Ida has stunned the author of this book various times, with testimonies of remote anecdotes. A first example? The text – entirely remembered – of the little song sung

back then, every morning, after prayers, at the Dante Alighieri school: *Viva Dante gran maestro dell'italica favella / è la lingua la più bella che si possa immaginar* (Long live Dante great teacher of the Italic speech / it is the most beautiful language that can ever be imagined...)

She was barely ten years old when her father was killed in an ambush: *5 small children were left behind, my eldest brother was working on the ships. We three sisters found warmth and serenity in the nuns' institute, where we were taken in. Learning even to cook, sew and make sweaters. It was our home and family, because when I was 14 years old, my mother died of tuberculosis. At the age of 21 however, having reached the age limit, I sadly had to leave the institute.* Returning to Carcase, she began to work in the nursery school, as a teacher's assistant. Five years later she married Emilio Reia, a native of Villesse, having moved into the area together with his brothers, to work the fields of an estate received as a gift. From the marriage 6 children were born, of whom 3 just before the war. The youngest was born and died, while Ida was alone with the first two children – Franco and Loredana – because her husband was called up in the army. Of that period, unforgettable was the support received from the teacher Anita Spinaci, remembered with a lot of affection by the mother and daughter. *I still pray for her every evening* – are Ida's words, who then found herself experiencing the dramatic incursions of the German and partisan, in search of food, in the midst of shootouts. *There was a lot of fear* – she continues. *At night we would go into the fields with blankets wrapped around ourselves. In order to*



Ida Derin Reia with her children at Carcase

eat we had to make do with the produce of the countryside. The partisans had taken some boys from the town, sending them into the woods in order to fight against the Germans. They were probably around the age of 16. They all died. Terrible are the memories which come back to her mind, both of the last year of the war and of the postwar period. In 1944, I had to take refuge in Friuli with some of my husband's family members, in order to save myself from the threats of Tito's partisans and from their intimidating intrusions into the house... Two of my husband's cousins, after having been forced to dig their graves, had gasoline poured over them and were burnt alive; another one was killed beaten to death...

She hoped in a new-found serenity with her husband's return home, with whom she went back to Carcase. There was the vegetable garden, the henhouse and a few cows for their sustenance. Another three children were born: Elsa, Oriella and Fabio. *The times, however, continued to be difficult: the resentment was tangible and the violence prevailing. Having annulled religious festivities, it was mandatory to go to school on Christmas Day – intervenes her daughter Loredana. When my parents kept me home, upon returning to class the principal hit me, giving me a detention as punishment until seven o'clock in the evening. My father – a janitor at the Italian secondary school of Capodistria – had to pay a fine of 4,550 dinars, when his salary was 4,500 dinars a month.*

Her brother Franco had attended the Seminary of Trieste for a while, but being caught with some saints' prayer cards upon which he had drawn beards and moustaches, it was understood that that was not his vocation. Having returned to Capodistria, he was able to register for teachers' college, yet again thanks to the help of the teacher Spinaci.

It was still hoped that Istria could remain united to Italy, but in 1954 we understood that the reality would be different – the two women almost explain in unison. On Christmas Day of 1955, the Reias crossed the border: their life moved to Trieste, to the refugee camp of Padriciano. They took everything possible along with them, even a steer and a calf: the animals immediately found a buyer, the furniture was stored at the silos. ...and remained there. My brother Fabio, six years old back then, entering into the shack assigned to him exclaimed: this is the room, where is the kitchen? – Loredana smiles today. They manoeuvred themselves amidst tight spaces and unpleasant food, facing the gusts of the bora, which filtered in through the cracks or accompanied them to the long line ups at the collective wash basins, where freezing cold they would wash themselves in line. Their father had taken a gardening course, Loredana began to work in the shoe factory set up at the port. Franco expressed the desire to follow a group of friends, who were leaving for Canada.

The father responded: *either everybody goes or nobody at all*. It was the 8th March, 1957, when they boarded the ship Saturnia leaving from Trieste. Loredana was against her family members' choice. On the back seat of her cousin's motorcycle, which on the evening before the departure had taken her to say goodbye to her uncles and aunts, she was actually praying that the vehicle would overturn, thus incapacitating her to leave. Instead, fitted with sadness, climbed aboard, in contrast to the music and the streamers which preceeded the ship leaving the pier. Below their grandmother was crying. Just like the majority of the crowd that had gathered together on the quay, crying out their last goodbyes to the family members who were leaving. The uncle, with a boat, flanked the ship and accompanied them for a while in their journey to an unknown future. In Ida's baggage there was the old Singer, the sewing machine which had belonged to her mother, and the photographs of the most significant affections. ...thus these memories make Ida get a lump in her throat. *During the crossing I was turning 17 years old* – continues



Moments of carefreeness of the 5 Reia kids at Carcase

Loredana: in Naples my mother gave me a pin with a cameo as a gift. The cold and snow greeted them upon their arrival in Halifax. I remember the bananas which the assistants offered us upon landing: I had never seen any as big as those. We tried to buy a bit of bread, but we only found the square type... We were sent to Quebec.

Despite the roughness of the start of the new life – and for the logistical settlement and the kind of jobs – that period comes out positively from the memory of the Reias, supported by the great amiability and availability of the people encountered. Welcomed with open arms right upon the arrival, there was not an evening in which someone would care to bring a package to their family: from a bag of sugar to one of flour. Not to mention the collection of blankets and clothing organized in the town. *But we could not put on old shoes that had already been worn by others* – was the explanation of Mrs. Ida who, regularly a few times a week, would light up a bonfire with shoes, giving rise to noxious fumes due to the burnt material.



It was the 8th March, 1957, when the Reias boarded the ship Saturnia. In Ida's baggage, amongst the many memories were the photographs of the most significant affections

The cuisine in Quebec was a disaster – continues Loredana’s story, for a while domestic helper for a family with 5 children, from 1 to 10 years of age. There were no fresh vegetables; they used canned foods, toast, cereals; they would put maple syrup on everything, even on top of the pasta. Even dad and Franco as soon as they arrived, had worked in the collection and production of maple syrup. But not only, because on that first farm there was even livestock to look after: besides cows, there were a hundred pigs. When they died, the corpses would be thrown into the fields and they would immediately be attacked by crows – was Ida’s horrified memory. We were not used to seeing such things. Loredana thought that the time had come to go to Toronto. She began with a visit to Adelia Marussi – her very dear friend right from the time of Padriciano, with whom she had even shared the Atlantic crossing. At Christmas, the whole family would gather together in the capital city of Ontario, which later became their definitive residence. Dad perhaps was better off in Quebec, perhaps more suitable to him. On hindsight, the thought now makes me feel a bit of remorse with regards to his memory – specifies Loredana. Guests for a few months of Emilia Grison, a relative of my mother who lived in Toronto, in March we began with the mortgage acquisition of the first house. I worked in a shoe factory, Franco was a welder, dad worked in the construction sector. Their work, however, was seasonal. In order to make up for the missing income, we would then take on some young men as boarders. Amongst them was a native of Treviso, Lino Semenzin, who later became her husband. They all positively assimilated into the new Canadian life, though not forgetting their origins. When we were at home, dad often used to remind us: up to that door there is Italy; outside there is Canada.

On various occasions they visited the places of their origin; in 1979, the Reia father thought going back to Italy, but his wife did not agree: there were children and grandchildren in Canada. Today there are even great grandchildren. In all a family of 25 people.

LUIGI LOVISCEK

Unusual is the route which from Canale d’Isonzo, in the vicinities of Caporetto – where he was born in 1935 – led him to Canada.

A tragic fatality had it that his father died during a shootout right on the last day of the war. With his three brothers at his grandfather’s house, Luigi found himself in the area which in the postwar period was under Yugoslavian administration: his mother was in Italy, in their house in Gorizia. He joined her in May of 1949 together

with the family members, against the directives of the postwar regime, which wanted to send the four orphans to different institutes in Yugoslavia. They escaped across the borderline, very close to their grandfather's home. After the passage through various IRO refugee camps, the four boys together with their mother moved to Norway, where Luigi first worked as a mechanic and then as a person in charge of heating systems. Friend of an English student, leaving for Canada with a scholarship for the University of Hamilton, he decided to follow him as an emigrant. It was 1957 and the young Loviscek, with 200 dollars and a small suitcase, decided to face a trip into the incognito: *I was healthy, strong and I wanted to work* – was his explanation. He set sail from Liverpool aboard the ship Carinzia. The first leg was Montreal: *we took a taxi to a motel. It cost 14 dollars* – he tells. His friend left a few days later in order to reach his destination. *I knew English, but in Montreal it was necessary to speak also French. I left for Ottawa, where I bought a map, looking for the most important city close to Montreal. I did not have any support, I however had a great will to succeed* – he continues. They advised him to head to Toronto, of which he knew absolutely nothing, but he listened to the advice. After a few days of precarious accommodations, he was able to live as a boarder with an Italian family. The first job in a long series was at a service station. Contemporarily, he studied electronics and perfected his English, until he was finally employed in the stamping sector of a precision machinery company.

In all of these years he has maintained contact both with Gorizia and with Norway, where he more or less returns every year in order to pay a visit to his friends of the old days. He would like to fix up the old house which saw him grow up as a child, now abandoned and in ruins. *I do not rule out a return. One can never say never....*

DIONISIO FURLANI

The meeting with Dionisio Furlani was a casual one, passing through Toronto between one flight and another. Despite the trials he had gone through in his youth, his is a winning figure, from his life lived around the world, in the real meaning of the word.

Born in 1934 at Capodistria, where he lived at Prade Lazzaretto – in an area gravitating around Trieste – his family was rather well-off and quite numerous: 10 children. Unfortunately while his mother was waiting for the last one to be born, he just a 9 year old child, tragically experienced the war first hand. On the 2nd October, 1943, with his eldest brother – fourteen years old – had gone to get milk at the farm

house of their family members. When they opened the gate, they discovered that in the courtyard there was a round up in progress by the Germans: pointing machine-guns at the people lined up in front of a wall, with their hands up in the air. Having quickly closed the gate, the two boys fled, very frightened. Their fleeting appearance had, however, been badly interpreted by the German patrol, which turned them into a target of their machineguns. Dionisio managed to fall to the ground upon the warning of his brother, who instead was mowed down by a burst of machinegun fire. Shaken and nevertheless wounded, the small survivor ran home, hiding himself beneath his bed. *Not knowing anything about the tragedy that had occurred a few moments before and thinking that it was a prank, his mother and aunt drove me out of the hiding place with a broom, asking where Egidio was* – is Furlani's story, while his voice cracks from the emotion of the memory.

In the postwar period he resumed his studies: *at school we had to learn two languages. Having completed the 4th and 5th year of secondary school, really difficult times arrived in 1953-1954, with the policy of ethnic cleansing instituted against Italians. I wanted to leave legally, but they would not give me permission to go away.* Nisio – as he was called by his friends – then thought about verifying if there were any possibilities of escaping in the area close to the border. His plan was, however, noticed by some informants at the service of the regime then in power: it cost him three months in prison. Released from prison, the opportunity to escape presented itself thanks to the help of a teacher of his, who simulated that she needed his help to move a row boat. It was the 23rd September, 1954, when with that little row boat he managed to reach the Scalo Legami (dock for timber) in Trieste, having survived a crossing with the bora and the sea in turmoil. All he had on himself was the clothes that he was wearing. He found hospitality with an aunt of his, who lived in via Ghirlandaio 8. After having taken evening courses at the Volta Institute, he found work at the Paduan agency which operated in the promotional sector. From that moment on it becomes a bit arduous to summarize his human and professional journey – particularly intense and imaginative in reshaping itself – which in the beginning led him to travelling all over Italy. Having found the right interlocutors in Como, he managed to find adequate shelter for about forty refugee families, who lived in poor conditions in Trieste. Meanwhile, he attended the hotel school of Villa d'Este for a two year period. Through appropriate contacts and thanks to the languages he knew, while the International Exposition of Bruxelles was being set up, in 1957 he went on to work as a factotum clerk at the Italian embassy in Belgium. *At that time, I practically saw the Common European Market being born, the first step towards today's European Union* – he tells. Always and nevertheless

in planning ferment, Nisio began to look towards the USA. He decided to board the first ship that was leaving: the transatlantic liner was, however, heading to Canada. *Having landed in Quebec City, I then found a job at Simpson's, a chain of big stores specializing in catalogue sales* – he explains. The purchase of his first car was an occasion in order to start the friendship with Riccardo Del Cantero, met in a previous interview. Not having let off the American dream, later there was a period when he lived between Hollywood and New York, which saw him working in the restaurant and the hospitality sector. Assistant manager of a hotel in Beverly Hills and F&B manager of a restaurant chain in the United States, at the airport in New York he had a happy encounter with a Dominican girl: she has been his wife for over 40 years. Having moved to Santo Domingo, where he started a canning industry with success, he continued to work in the restaurant sector between Miami and Toronto: here, he has just recently sold a company of his – founded by him and very popular on Canadian soil – for the production of condiments and sauces, bruschettas and garlic conserved in a Mexican style. In Santo Domingo, where he retired to, he now “only” looks after the hotel that he opened up there. His world travelling, however, continues: a son of his is the Vice President of a banking institute in Mexico, his daughter lives in Florida. *I, however, feel 100% Italian* – he specifies. And even his three grandchildren understand Italian.

During such an incredible existence, Nisio had even managed to return to Capodistria many times: *even if I am used to travelling around the world, the first time that I saw it again I cried.*

ERMANNIO MAURO

Few are the memories which take him back to Rovigno, where he was born in 1939: the war, the arrival of the Germans... The shadow is, however, crossed by a flash of light, at the moment in which the time of his first year at school comes back to his mind, when they made him sing one of Brahms' lullaby. Perhaps a premonition of his future career. *We lived close to the sea. I was the youngest of four children* – the framework of his Istrian infancy. His parents worked at the Tobacco Manufacturing Company, something which allowed them to obtain a job transfer first to Venice and then to Florence, after the decision to leave the land of origin, due to the incompatibility of cohabiting with the new regime which had set in after the war. His father left immediately in 1945. Ermanno joined him the following year with the rest of the family. The trunks with their personal effects, prepared with care by

his mother, never reached their destination: *we found ourselves only with the things that we had with us. Something very sad to remember* – he explains.

In Venice, he and a brother of his were lodged in an orphanage. Paradoxal was the settling in of the other family members, who for over a year did not have any other place to sleep other than the hall of the cemetery of San Michele: the beds would be set up in the evening and dismantled early the following morning. Moving to Florence, their stay in the refugee camp lasted eight years, until 1956. Realising that there was no future for them, preceded by his sister who left for Canada a year earlier, Ermanno too in 1958 headed for emigration. He left from Venice, aboard the ship *Vulcania*: in his dreams was only the desire to build a future for himself. Halifax appeared to him as a bit of a ramshackled port. The contact with the new reality was almost a collision: from the language that he did not know to the habits that he ignored, conditioned by not knowing how to order something to eat to identifying the right door of the public washrooms. He was helped during the trip from Montreal to Edmonton by a kind lady belonging to the Canadian diplomatic corps, whom he met on the train: from her he even found out that, determining the refusal at the bar to serve him a beer, was due to his age of 19, as alcoholic drinks could be served only to those above 21. At the destination he was able to re-embrace his sister, married, already the mother of a child and expecting another one. He immediately found work in his brother-in-law's garage. Of that first period of settlement he recalls his wonder when in September, waiting in a line outside a cinema, his light Italian shoes froze onto the ground due to the cold.

The genetic passion for singing, given to him by his father, a tenor, was about to explode. *I loved music even before I studied it* – is his consideration. He began as a member of the church choir: *...and pull here, pull there, and let's move ahead* – is the witty remark with which his modesty redimensions an important career. *Evidently it was destiny* – he continues – telling about his encounter with an orchestra director of Venetian origins, residing in Toronto, who did everything he could in order to get him a scholarship in the metropolis. *I began. But one never finishes studying.*

He debuted by substituting a singer, who fell ill during a performance of *Il Trovatore*. *Era il Trovatore ed hanno trovato me* (IT WAS THE FINDER, AND THEY FOUND ME) – he jokes. From there the take off of his career, which first took him to London, where he continued his preparation: *and step, after step, I ended up going everywhere*. In 1981, even at the Verdi in Trieste – for *Manon Lescaut* – where he, however, had some disagreements with the organization. The most beautiful memory nevertheless remains tied to *the two first times*, in 1978: one at the Scala in Milan, the other one

at the Metropolitan in New York, which then signed him up for 15 years as a tenor. *I, however, love everything that I had an opportunity of doing* – he highlights. For many years in London, at Covent Garden, he travelled the world a lot but, upon his return to Canada he rediscovered the country which opened up its doors to him. *By now everything is here, for me. I, however, remain Istrian in the blood.*

He has returned a couple of times to Rovigno, in 1968 and in 1979: *everything had changed, everything was more touristic* – was his impression.

He now teaches in English how to interpret Italian operas. Having retired from artistic activity, he is satisfied that he was able to abandon the clothes of the different characters in order to be himself. *Few but good are the friends with whom I share my time.* Carlo Bucci – whom we will meet later on – is one of them.

He, however, remains in contact with his colleagues of the musical world, because one of his three children, is the artistic director of the Detroit Opera. His daughter is an amateur singer in musical comedies; the third has a beautiful voice, but he stays far from the limelight, which he thinks is responsible for *his father's life with a suitcase*. Having grown up in a predominantly English speaking world, they do not speak Italian, while Ermanno transmits to his grandson the love for Istria and the child repeats what his grandfather is teaching him.

How far away the times of the orphanage are, when they would chase me away from the choir because I would sing the Gregorian Mass as a second voice!!!

LUIGI AND GIGLIOLA RUSSIGNAN

My goodness Gino, what I would give in order to drink a coffee! Perhaps from that phrase, pronounced by Gigliola as soon as she had landed in Canada in 1960, the successful Canadian journey of this couple started off. But probably only the most intimate know who the Russignan are, while all of North America identifies them with Barzula coffee, the leading company in the coffee sector.

The brilliance of this successful career, however, obscured behind a restrained tear, when the movie camera of memories takes Luigi back to Isola, where he was born in March of 1933. Even at a distance of many years, Luigi – Gino for his friends – cannot hold back the emotion. *I can only say one thing. If it would be possible...* The voice trembles for a while and he cannot help but to interrupt himself. *I would even go back tomorrow, because my town is there, where I was born. I haven't forgotten anything, not even the chisel, which I used in order to chisel my name on the sidewalk...*

His numerous family was a dynasty of genuine natives of Isola. *Very d.o.c.* – Gino jokes, remembering his parents, his sisters, his many uncles and aunts and cousins... His grandmother had *a grocery store*. His father was an expert in wines, his grandfather in coffee which he would import and roast. *Learn the art and set it aside* was his motto, while he was accompanied by his grandson on his rounds supplying the merchandise, carrying him on the bicycle's handlebars. *I had to learn to buy and see everything* – the narrative continues. An eclectic person, with multiple interests, his grandfather was even a co-owner – with a partner from Trieste – of the Diadora, the steamer which covered the Trieste-Isola-Capodistria-Pirano line. *My father never climbed on board, because he used to go to Trieste by bicycle.*

The postwar period found Gino wanting to see the world: having started to work on the ships of the Navigation Company Italia, in 57 months he visited a bit of all of the globe. *Then the crash* – as he defines the events of 1954, following the London Memorandum: *with the borders closed, on many occasions my father was beaten up and had to deal with the OZNA*. The Russignan arrived as refugees in Trieste. Gino placed at his father's disposal all of his savings set aside during the navigation period, in order to allow him to open up a wine warehouse. Due to the partner's dishonesty, who pocketed the money without paying for the ordered merchandise, the experience wound up being a misadventure. Gino resumed the way of the sea, while his parents found accommodation in an apartment in the district of San Giovanni and his sister followed her husband to Udine. Upon the successive landing in Trieste, together with an uncle, Gino noticed the Bar Italia in Piazza Unità, operating below the Town Hall. At his side was Gigliola Monaco – his wife, by whom he had been literally bewitched right from the first time they met. *If you want me, I'll marry you* – she had said to him, as soon as they met. Obviously he had made the right choice, considering the 47 years of happy marriage. *I was born in Muggia by chance* – Gigliola explains, the daughter of a native of Muggia and of a native of Brindisi – *but I had always lived in Trieste: in via del Ponzanino before getting married, later on in the area of the stadium.*

The American dream popped up in the young couple's plans, solicited by the suggestion of a certain Mr. Coslovich known by them, nicknamed the earl. *I was thinking about the United States, when a few days later we found ourselves talking to the employee of the emigration office: we had instead been listed for Canada* – Gino explains. *Our names were the last two on the list, written with a pencil* – Gigliola intervenes. *They asked us whether we were prepared to work in the fields. While my husband was answering that he knew how to do everything, I made it clear that I absolutely lacked experience and interest in the agricultural sector: beneath the*

table, I felt the point of his shoe hitting me, as a mute rebuke. In the end, the two names written in pencil were transcribed with a pen on the list of departing persons. I had never gone farther than Venice; imagine how I was preparing myself to cross the ocean. I cried for six months – are the lady's words. The idea of returning ended up consoling her, because that trip in the unknown was read like a momentary interruption of the normality of life. We did not need to leave, we lived well. Gino, however, felt the call of his spirit of adventure, which had already cemented itself as a sailor. Even the personal experience referred to by Del Cantero – met on the previous pages – during that period in Trieste in order to verify the possibility of reinstating into the native city, contributed towards making him positively look towards Canada. I cannot forget the last day in Trieste – Gigliola continues. We fell from the Lambretta while we were taking a propane cylinder which were supposed to bring to a lady: the stitches of my dress gave way, but I could not change clothes, because all our luggage had already been sent on board. The providential intervention of a friend who was a tailor remedied the accident. They left aboard the ship Vulcania and the treatment aboard was particularly special, as a result of Gino's maritime past. It was the 1st May, 1960, when they landed in Halifax, finding themselves with their feet in the mud – as Gigliola tells. And then that goods train... It had everything that was bad and nothing



The Russignan opened up the first coffee-shop in Toronto on small College Street in 1964

good. The desire to refresh themselves with a nice hot beverage, made her pronounce the already quoted phrase: *My goodness Gino, what I would give to drink a coffee!* – followed by *if this is coffee!* after having tasted some dishwater, which she was served. *We understood that that country was in need of a good coffee* – she smiles. The Russignan's journey, however, did not immediately head in that direction, even if some economic resources allowed them to be able to decide and choose their future. Assigned to work in the countryside on the outskirts of Toronto, they declined to be accommodated on the farm which they had been sent to and with a taxi they returned to the city. *At the railway station, we asked information from a cleaning worker, who from the shoes he was wearing we could see was Italian* – the two-voice narrative continues. *Having learnt about our situation, he made a telephone call and in less than a blink of an eye a presidential car came to pick us up, perhaps belonging to some lady who was involved in giving assistance. After spending the night in a small hotel, we were put into contact with the Immigration Office, who settled us into an apartment in Little Italy. Gino went to work in a car body shop. Toronto was not*



6th October, 1969: souvenir photo of the Italian national boxing team in front of the Barzula coffee-shop, on the occasion of the international boxing championship. It was a general victory from the light to the heavy weight, so much so that the specialized press defined the overwhelming success as a “cappotto” of the Italian team in Canada

*beautiful back then: small wooden houses, shop windows decorated with silver foil... - Gigliola remembers. Having returned to Italy for the fatal illness of Gino's father, they felt the pull back to Canada. That time the departure was not a trial, but a definitive choice: in Trieste, they left behind the apartment and sold the bar; Gino went back to work in a car body shop in Toronto. One day it happened that amongst the economic announcements in a newspaper, his wife read about a little store on College Street, the Italian district of the city, which was being sold. They dressed themselves up properly. With a nice jacket, a hat – as Gigliola illustrates – they presented themselves to the Jewish couple who was selling the place: above there was a small apartment, below was the store. It was a kind of bazaar where a bit of everything was being sold: beans, shoelaces, sausages. We decided to buy it. The renovation work which we had to do in the rooms, forced us for two months to take a bath three times a day. In the end, however, it was a success, both for the better improvements made and for the products on sale, which we imported from Italy: costume jewellery, dolls, necklaces, horns... After 18 months we sold the business, having even made a discreet profit, sufficient in order to go onto doing what Gino was born for: in fact, on College Street we started the first coffee-shop in Toronto. When we roasted coffee, the people outside would line up in order to smell the aroma. In a short while, it became a compulsory reference point, and not only for Toronto: in brief, the Barzula Coffee sign even appeared on the tower of the Niagara Falls. The choice of the name fell upon the old family nickname, still given to Gino's great grandfather, it seems in memory of the big *brisiola* (chop) eaten in order to celebrate the good sale of a good consignment of livestock. With the success obtained, Gino and Gigliola gave life to a kind of franchising, with the opening up of various Barzula coffee-shops in the Italian district of Toronto. Having closed the retail sector, their activity as coffee operators is now carried out in the big namesake factory, with the use of technologically advanced machinery coming from Italy, the production of an excellent mixture which has conquered the market and a daily movement of 120 bags of crude coffee. In addition to such a commitment for some years now has even been the running of the La Perla *function building*, a centre of success for the setting up of receptions and conventions, managed by Gigliola with great professionalism. A hotel in Wasaga Beach and a restaurant in Acapulco complete the panorama of this couple's intense working life. Theirs is a human and professional journey in continuous ferment rewarded in 1998 with the nomination of commanders of the Italian Republic by merit.*

I could not expect anything more – declares Gino, who, however, has always found satisfaction in sharing his fortune with others. He has even done so by supporting a big beneficial initiative of his church: from the priest in charge he received

a blessing and a blessed rosary, which since then on has always been kept in his pocket. After 40 years in Canada, Gino now feels like *a native of Isola 101%*; and Italian, notwithstanding the Canadian passport. *Even if I always speak the dialect of Isola, I have to however admit – he adds – that I would not be able to think of my life without Canada, because I now think that I am a part of Canada, to which goes my grateful thought...* In front of his enormous house with a pool – in the midst of the vastness of 4 acres of land – two big flags have been fluttering for 40 years: the Italian and Canadian ones.

Often in Italy for business, he cannot but go to see once again his places of origin: *I go all alone, because I want to see everything again, touch everything, find myself with myself* – Barzula confides. And the lump of emotion makes itself felt again, while he remembers his first return to Isola in 1972, together with Alfio Benevenuti, the brother of the popular Nino. *That time I had to interrupt the trip, due to the situation of discomfort which I found myself in, caused by the evident tailing of which I was targetted by the OZNA. Luckily, the subsequent times went better.*

Amongst Gino and Gigliola's future plans there is now the realization of a monument to the exile, thus they are studying the possibility of setting up a scholarship for the author of the best project. *One has to know who the exile is and must remember the exile* – they conclude.

GUIDO AND BRUNA BRAINI

It's a wave of memories that start from afar for Guido, which begins from Sermino. *A small hill outside of Capodistria* – is his description of the town that he was born in June of 1932. *In the valley of Risano, which goes from Albaro Vescovà to Decani, to Capodistria: Sermino on the one side, Ancarano on the other. My forefathers lived there already in 1640: I recently found this out, in the first registry of the church of Lazzaretto. In the locality, when the famous railway Parenzana run, there was the Nobile stop* – he continues – *thus nicknamed due to the name of the owner of those lands...* *In order to show me the train that passed, when I was small my mother would put me on top of a stool close to the window.*

In his anthology of memories, there was even room for the period that he went to school: first at the Prade, behind Bertocchi – with teacher Conelli – then the technical school in Capodistria, followed by three years of evening classes at Muggia and by a lathe course in Trieste. He belonged to a family of farming traditions, but Guido's aspiration was to work in the Fabbrica Macchine (motor factory in Trieste).

His grandfather was a sharecropper for the Gravisis. There were 35 hectares of land to farm, the vineyards to look after, wine to be produced. *In our home the bedsheets were never warm* – is his witty remark in order to highlight how everyone made his own contribution towards work, ever since they were small.

Of the wartime period, unforgettable to him are the happenings of the 8th September, 1943: returning with his father from the pilgrimage to the church of Our Lady of Strugnano, they were struck by the unusual movement of ships leaving the port of Trieste. Having found out about the armistice, that evening his father popped a bottle of wine: *let us drink to the end of the war* – he said – *but it has just begun for us*. Unfortunately, his parent had properly seen things and the tragedy immediately brushed the Braini family. In the chaos which was created in those first days of confusion amongst the Italian troops, the 200 soldiers stationed at Sermino had tried to save themselves from the arrival of the Germans, by fleeing in civilian clothes. Abandoned by the soldiers, the two local barracks had remained at the mercy of ransacking. *The people took away everything they could find: toilets, stones, tiles* – continues the story. *And even ammunition, at times forgotten in the pockets of the uniforms no longer worn. In that framework of total confusion, we children would move around. My father had immediately warned me about the danger of certain little red boxes which we could have run into: they were bombs and they were not to be touched at all*. A warning, which Guido frighteningly repeated to Argia Apollonio – the 5 year old sister of a friend of his, who often hung out with her brother's little group of friends – while curious, on that 11th September, 1943, was showing him the little red box which she had found. But it was not enough. The explosion struck her in full. Her body acted as a shield for him and his cousin: although wounded, they managed to save themselves. *I found myself covered in blood and with a terrible pain to my thumb: more than 80 pieces of shrapnel were stuck under my fingernail* – was the description of those dramatic moments. *I can still remember their metallic sound, when the doctor of the hospital of Ancarano – removing them one by one – would make them fall into a white enamel basin. I continued to visit Argia at the cemetery, upon every return of mine from Canada. Unfortunately the last time I was there, I found another name on her tombstone. I confess that I cried*. While the young Braini was about to become a teenager, the war, as foreseen by his father, had arrived in front of his home: shootings, clashes between partisans and the Germans, the *foibe*. They would not talk about the horrors in front of the children, *but children always manage to hear everything* – are the words of Guido, continuing to recall the events. *The escalation reached the peak on the night of the 2nd October, 1943: it seemed as if all of Istria was on fire – from Bertocchi to Pobeghi. Hitler was scared, because*

Istria was disarmed and could have easily been a landing point for the British. The German army arrived with the best armament, the panzer tanks and new kinds of cannons, the tigers. How the hisses of their ranges impressed me! In two days they caused three thousand dead. 1944 went by, with its dramas and with the alternating incursions to the homes – already referred many times – by the opposite factions in search of food: nazifascists during the day, partisans at night. *1945 arrived, many Italians, though active in the liberation struggle, found themselves at risk of elimination by the exponents of the new regime.* With the end of the war in sight, in the valley of Risano with a few mates of the same age, Guido witnessed the retreat of the last German column, which was decimated within the vicinity of Albaro Vescovà, during the night clash. At the same point, on the following day the boys crossed the first outpost of the IX Corps of Tito, heading to occupy Trieste.

In the postwar period it was difficult to be Italians in Capodistria. A demonstration for all was the killing of *Pescefritto*, nickname for the owner of the restaurant with the same name, who came out of his place with the Italian flag. *It was understood that you could be Italian only at home, and not show it* - continues the story. Many began to leave. Times became even more difficult following the Memorandum of London: the border was closed, agricultural produce only had to be taken to the cooperative of Bertocchi. Guido, interested in verifying the modifications to the border taking place on the spot, involuntarily crossed the demarcation line: arrested by the Yugoslav militia patrolling the border, he was imprisoned for 15 days in S. Anna in Capodistria. *An experience which left me a mark* – he explains: *locked up in a cell, everyday a stroll around the courtyard in order to get some fresh air and two meals. For the rest of the time I read a lot. Luckily I found a lot of books by Jack London, my favourite author.* With the *Memorandum d'Intesa*, the Brainis understood that their hopes had ended: it was autumn of 1954, when they left Sermino for Trieste.

Registered at the refugee camp of San Giovanni, after a provisional accommodation, they were hired as custodians in a villa of Banne, in which there was the green area to be restored. *The simplest thing in the world was to ask my father and grandfather to work as farmers: that was all they knew how to do* – is Guido's comment. *In a short while they managed to transform that moor of dry twigs and bush: into an orchard, into a vegetable garden with all kinds of vegetables, into a vineyard which in a few years produced up to 20 hectolitres of wine. They even built a barn for cows, which produced a lot of milk.* With such a successful production, the Braini mother – remembering her youth, when in order to prepare her trousseau she would take the milk to Trieste to sell – 50 years later she resumed for a while her old activity. Her milk licence was dated 1926. She would go down first thing in the morning,

with the street car of Opicina: they would call it the milk street car, for the many women who, like her at that hour, would take the produce to the city. Guido, after a temporary work in construction, began to work in the Colombin cork factory. He managed to find the girl, whom he had never stopped thinking about, since he had met her, still in Istria: Bruna Coslan. Born in 1934 in a hamlet of Capodistria – Bertocchi – she had lived there with her family until the exodus: her parents, 3 sisters, a brother. Amongst her childhood plans, she had thought of becoming a nurse. *But it was difficult in those days to continue to study* – she highlights. The war years had left indelible signs in her memory as a girl: the nightly raids of the partisans who took away her father for a few days, the ambushes, the vendettas, the dead. And then May of 1945 – while she was going to look for a doctor for her mother, who had just given birth – and the memory of three very young German soldiers, met along the way: with hands raised in the air and a white handkerchief in their hands, looking for someone who would allow them to surrender.

After the wedding to Guido and the birth of their firstborn son, Bruna agreed with her husband's plan to try the Canadian adventure for a few years: they set a time limit of five years in order to put aside a bit of money and return to Trieste. Guido had made an emigration request kept secret from his father and grandfather, which he still recalls their reaction today, in finding out about the news. *But what are your parents doing? No one of the Braini family has ever done anything similar. One does not go around the world. How come haven't I been able to teach these things!?* – were the questions that he desperately directed at his little grandson, whom he had taken in his arms. *It is better to starve at home than in another town* – his uncle Giovanni had said to him. Guido and Bruna left on Easter Monday together with little Robert, in April of 1960. They had the last meal with friends and family members who had come to say goodbye to them, in the bedroom of the villa of Banne. The view from the window could span over the Gulf of Trieste, and even further beyond. On that day they above all noted the steamship Vulcania, which was awaiting them. They boarded after the Mass celebrated for the occasion by Bishop Santin. They arrived in Halifax on the 1st May: it was Sunday and the city was covered in snow. *We had the first encounter with the Canadian authorities: phlegmatic people, who after having registered us, issued us a green card on which our name, origin, ship, and the two fateful words: landed immigrant, were written. That small green card gave us the right to become Canadian citizens after five years.* Guido's thought is positive in reliving those moments. Having reached Hamilton, where they had been sent to, the small family was welcomed by a priest from Treviso. It was a reciprocal surprise to hear everyone speaking with a Venetian accent. There was an economic

contingency in progress and the priest suggested that they follow the directives of the Immigration Office, which guaranteed a piece of bread and a bed. There were 75,000 unemployed people in the city. *Let's go back to Trieste Bruna, where there are only 25,000 of them* – was the reaction of Guido, as a joke. They had adequate support: settled for 15 days into a full board hotel, the transfer to London followed, where there were the big tobacco plantations. They found themselves subjected to the unpleasant experience of the selection by the farmers: *we were inspected and chosen, like at a livestock auction* – explains Bruna. *I was chosen insofar as I was blonde, something which made the Hungarian farmer who hired us presume, that I spoke German. We got by with a mix of English and a bit of Slovenian. He, however, turned out to be a likeable person, just as was the family of Serbs in the house next door. They even lent me a radio, which could pick up an Italian station: when I turned it on they were playing the song The Emigrant. I could not manage to hold back the emotion, because after quite sometime I could hear my language spoken again. Work in the tobacco fields was hard. Even for those who were used to being farmers* – explains Guido. Imagine his wife, not used to the countryside and with a



Interviews for the selection of personnel. At the centre, with functions of an interpreter, probably an immigrant who had arrived previously (courtesy of Mr. Michinson)

clear skin: she found herself planting and hoeing under a burning sun. The subsequent sunburn caused her a fever.

Bit by bit they managed to resume contacts with their fellow countrymen from whom they had remained isolated: they decided to reach the ones in Toronto. Bruna had a stroke of luck and immediately found a good job in a food factory, where she worked for 38 years, until she retired. *She was our family's support* – Guido lovingly recognizes, who began his working career in Toronto as a gardener in the greenhouses of a big garden centre. The boss could not manage to pronounce his name, so he changed it to John. He liked that job, but a bad accident happened - when he was getting off a bus while going to work - made him lose a finger from his hand. After two months of forced inactivity, he began to work again: first as a mechanic, then moving onto electro-mechanics and finally electronics.

They managed to buy their first house in 1963: besides being a significant step in their Canadian journey, it was synonymous with independence from the conditions of the landlady, where up until then they had lived as tenants: she did not want too many visits from friends and she controlled the domestic consumption of water and gas.

46 years in Canada, 3 children, many returns to Trieste, which Braini tried to make more frequent and combined with a visit to the land of his own roots. The first took place in 1969: *at the time of the landing of the first man on the moon* – specifies Guido, who even specifies that he feels Italian, of Istro-Venetian culture. *But I even reserve a lot of admiration for Canada, for how it is administered, by the way in which it treats emigrants and takes an interest in its people. There are problems, but they exist everywhere. Toronto has become a big city and it finds itself dealing with the consequences: delinquency, drugs, organized crime. The ratio is 4 and a half million inhabitants against 70/80 murders a year. Scary, if we, however, compare it to other cities of its size, we find that Detroit has 1,200 murders while Washington has 1,600*

We are in good hands here: the head of the Civil Protection Unit of Ontario is a Friulian, born in Codroipo: Julian Fantino. ...and even the head of the Mounties is an Italian.

LORETTA RUBESSA in MARANZAN

She was a few months old when with her mother she found herself displaced at Drenova – on the hills, just outside Fiume, where she was born at the end of 1943. The family home was destroyed by the bombardments and mother Rubessa with her

two little daughters had found hospitality with a friend. *Having returned to the city at the end of the war, we went to live in Lauri home, at number 17 in via Nicolò Host* – explains Loretta thanks to an incredible memory, which brings back to her mind even rather remote memories of her very early childhood. Of the days that followed she recalls – still shuddering now at the thought – the long line of trucks, with their loads of people and personal effects, leaving from a world which all of a sudden had become alien and hostile. *Everybody is going away, what are we doing here?* – asked her mother. They were awaiting their father's return, who almost arrived just at the time of the closure of the borders. The season of the options began, with long waiting lines at the counters and obscure parameters for the granting of exit visas. The Rubessa family's request had been rejected more than 5 times. The reason for the refusal was due to the the professional competence of his father – a specialized mechanic in the torpedo and propeller sector at the local torpedo factory – which the higher government echelons did not want to lose. While her maternal grandmother lived amongst packed up furniture, while awaiting permission to leave, hindering their departure instead was uncle Modesto, her father's brother, who had aligned himself with the new regime, which he collaborated with. Amongst the justifications adopted with the denied recognition of their option for Italianness, was the one – absolutely deprived of a basis - of a Slav origin of the family. *My father Nadalin, only knew how to say this is red in Slav* – Loretta now jokes. The years of her childhood and of her early adolescence spent in Fiume coincided *with beautiful and yet very ugly memories at the same time. The Belvedere school was very beautiful, big, with a garden, a soccer field. We would run in the Cellini field; we would go to the beach, with that splendid sea... The bitter part of all of this was not feeling free at all at home, being badly stared at by the new arrivals, having come from the far away Balkan areas, with such a different language and traditions from ours... We would be shoved – or even worse – if we were caught speaking Italian in the streets; we would be investigated, if we were of a certain economic condition; private initiative, even the smallest, was not to exist, like for example the sale of flowers, which my mother would grow in the garden; we could not go to church. I was 9 years old, when during Christmas Mass stones were thrown at the church windows: the broken pieces of glass wounded a lot of people, including the celebrant whom I remember had his face covered in blood. I attended the Italian school, but there was a particular teacher, who tried to brainwash us in favour of the new direction.*

The family's wait to get the exit visa to Italy lasted 10 years. Having paid the so-called clearance fee – very costly if compared to the conditions of misery that they lived in – they were able to reacquire Italian citizenship and the relative passports.

It should be specified, however, that during that span of time, while dad Nadalin was refused permission to leave, Loretta with her mother, grandmother and sister were all allowed to go and visit on many occasions her aunt who lived in Rome. A city in which her eldest sister, who in the meantime got married, in 1953 decided to wait there for her husband, who was planning to escape from Fiume together with his brother. Their attempt to escape was however blocked at the beginning with the arrest and detention of the two young men.

It was 1957 when the Rubessas' exodus began: Trieste, Udine, Marina di Carrara. *There was a beautiful beach and for me a young girl it was much easier to overcome the discomfort. My parents instead found themselves dealing with their future, being with the precarious housing: all together in a small room with a matrimonial bed, a folding camp bed, a table and a stove. No possibility for work – is the memory of those days. After a year we managed to have ourselves moved to Rome, where at the Regina Elena Hospital my sister worked as a nurse and my aunt as a radiologist.* They were settled into the refugee camp of Borgata Alessandrina, close to Cinecittà, which was an occasion for working as extras in the world of cinema. All summed up it was an amusing experience, for the young people. For Nadalin instead, age was becoming an obstacle in order to obtain a job. He, therefore, decided to accept the 50,000 Italian liras, given as a gratuity from the refugee camp, and to go to Canada, where an aunt of his already lived. Having passed the strict medical examinations and the rigid tests in order to be admitted to emigration, with the ship Conte Biancamano they landed in Halifax in February of 1960. They were equipped in order to face the cold and the snow, which they soon found themselves dealing with, right from the moment they landed. There were, however, a lot of emigrants from southern Italy, absolutely unprepared for the rigid climate. *I remember a Calabrian woman with seven children, who did not even know how to express herself in fluent Italian: without coats, just a few shawls – continues the story.* Decisive in those circumstances was the intervention of the Salvation Army workers who, having collected second hand but clean and in good condition clothes, from big containers placed in the terminal, distributed them. *They unloaded from the ship the crates with our personal effects, making them fall onto the pier from a height of at least 20 metres – is the reconstruction of the arrival. I recall that the prices were reasonable at the port's shop, where my mother went to do a bit of shopping before climbing aboard the train for Toronto: a loaf of bread was 5 cents, a can opener was 2 cents, a bottle of Coca Cola was 10 cents. She, above all, stocked up on canned goods, in order to face the three day trip which awaited us before arriving at destination.* Besides the mileage, the trip took a lot of time, because everytime a scheduled train was approaching,

the one of the immigrants was relegated to a waiting track. Even on that occasion, one's youthfulness was a winning antidote for the uneasiness, by transforming the long hours on the train into a cheerful musical reunion: in the group of boys met on the train, there was, in fact, one who knew how to play the accordion. Loretta lent him the Scandalli instrument – a great luxury at the time, worth 300,000 Italian liras – which she was taking to her cousin in Toronto. Their songs, dances and laughter contrasted the tears of the older travelling companions, who fearfully looked towards the future that was awaiting them. The Rubessas arrived in Toronto on the 23rd February and it was a double celebration: besides finding themselves amongst family members, it was even their uncle and aunt's 25th wedding anniversary. Loretta, however, was expecting to arrive in a metropolis like New York. *But where is the city? Where are the buildings?* – her curiosity was bothering her cousin, who came to welcome her by car at the railwaystation. *The city was extent, but only made up of small houses, usually two storied. The only buildings that were a bit taller were the Eaton and Simpson stores. At that moment it was an outright disappointment. After the first three days, I would have gone back to Italy swimming* – she admits. Hosted for six months with some family members, her parents managed later on to rent a semi-detached home together with a cousin of her mother. It was not a time in which apartments to rent could be easily found. Her dad improvised himself in many jobs, from a painter to a bricklayer: he began with 35 dollars a week to then reach 60, sufficient in order to pay the rent. With the rest of his monthly salary it was possible to buy the furniture in instalments and reimburse the cost of the trip – about 600 dollars per person. It took about three years in order to pay it off. Her mother would put aside every penny possible, in order to be able to make the family nucleus of the other daughter arrive: one, in fact, had to show that there was a certain economic independence in order to procede with a recall. Having reached the 2,000 dollar mark – mainly in the form of a loan – the attestation of solvency on the part of the bank allowed the small family to arrive. The young lady went to work in a health department, which assisted elderly people with mental problems. She could not resume her profession as a nurse, because she was not naturalized. *At the time, there were doctors who in the hospitals had to wash the floors, in order to keep up with the necessary studies to pass the exams for the recognition of their academic titles* – tells Loretta. *My brother-in-law went to work with my father in a boatyard. On my part, two days after my arrival, my uncle found me a job in the Johnny Lombardi supermarket.* A second generation Italian-Canadian, he was an authentic personality among the immigrants. After having reached popularity with his radio messages which advertised his products in Italian, in 1966 he founded Chin

Radio, broadcasting Italian announcements and songs which managed to touch the most sensitive hearts of our emigrants. It was the first step towards the success of the radio station, having become in time an important multicultural reality, with its broadcasting in 18 languages.

For Loretta, the different activities of the period of settling in required more or less three years: from the learning of the language to housing, to the search for a job. She was working as an ironing lady in a dry cleaner's shop when, close to her twenty-first birthday, she almost casually met Lucio Maranzan, a native of Vicenza – whom she married a few months later – the owner of a small emporium in which a bit of everything was sold: from Italian newspapers to records, to inexpensive jewellery. It was this last sector which he preferred to develop, strengthened by his experience in the gold sector, previously acquired in Italy. Cooperating with him was his wife – for over 40 years at his side – who gave him three daughters.

The business often took the couple to Italy in those years and Loretta took advantage of it to return to Fiume. *The first time was a big disappointment due to the state of abandonment that I found it in – she remembers. On different occasions I had to put up with displeasing arguments at the border, due to my birthplace written in my passport, Fiume – Italy. In any case it is a story that is over, a turned page. Even if surely of Italian roots, I now feel that I am a citizen of the world. Different languages are spoken in my family and we relate amongst ourselves with the one that turns out to be more convenient for the moment.*

She concludes with an affectionate thought for Canada: *in the 1960s it was surely more tranquil and clean. Today, crime has attacked it. We came here in order to rebuild our lives and grow. From all races, which we found ourselves living with, we have learnt a lot and have improved. Now instead, the last arrivals bring their hatred along with them, destroying the paradise where we once arrived. Back then Canada was a real paradise... except for the snow...*

REMIGIO AND MARIA DODICH

Isola was actually a happy island: the synthesis of a far distant image, almost conserved in the memory of all of the natives of Isola, met throughout these years by the author of this book. The same thing happens with Remigio, born in 1928 at Baré, *a small village, about two kilometres outside of Isola d'Istria* - he explains. Remigio lived there with his parents, a brother and a sister. There were a little more than 44 families, of which half had the surname of Bologna. The memory continues

to take shape with his first year at school: *in the first two months, to go to school I had to walk for half an hour through a muddy road. But then the new school was built, right in Baré, and every time I go back I cannot help but going to see it. We were 40 kids in the classroom... In those days, thinking about what I would do when I grow up, I saw myself as a skilled farmer like my father.* The Dodichs had a lot of land, where they would farm a bit of everything, but the vineyards were the main source of income. *I think that we produced the best refosco in Istria and very many inns in Trieste would come to buy their supplies from us, by purchasing 20-40 hectolitres of wine at a time.* Having gotten through the war, with all of its problems and fears, they found themselves suffering from the weight of the postwar period, absorbed into zone B, under Yugoslavian administration. As his father had already sensed towards the end of the conflict, Tito's regime, who had taken over the reins of power, cancelled every property right: the estates, the vineyards, all of a sudden no longer had any value. *The land cannot be neglected, otherwise it will take years to recover it – continues Remigio. Thus we continued to take care of it and to make it produce, but our wine could only be sold to the cooperatives, which would fix the price a year before. We have to admit, we did not go hungry, but we could not afford a suit, a whim. A pair of shoes could be bought with the sale of a barrel of wine. If one would then go to buy it in Trieste, because nothing could be found in our country, we were frowned upon because we were spending money in Italy. We, however, lived hopeful of the fact that things would change. They could not abandon us like this. Then instead, in 1954, we understood that it was only an illusion and that there was no more hope.* The departures began to be more and more numerous and frequent. In the meantime Remigio had met Maria Puzzer, a beautiful girl from Monte di Capodistria. They got married in 1951, with a double rite: both civil and religious. This was celebrated by the priest of the nearby parish, accepted by the notables because he was Slovenian. *He was a good priest, to tell the truth; unfortunately the one from my wife's parish was forced to escape because of beatings and threats, only because he was Italian – explains Remigio.* Even on the occasion of our wedding, we were hampered by a thousand obstacles to be allowed to use the hall at the Casa del Popolo (public house), to have a small party – he continues. The first child was born. In the following years, almost all of his friends had left. Even Remigio and his brother made a request. His father saw even the prospect for the future atrophized, which he saw as a replica of what already existed in Russia, but accepted to remain because of the wife, who felt as if she was dying at the only thought of having to leave her own land. Having postponed the departure until after the birth of their second child, by using the pass which allowed a weekly visit to

Italy, Remigio with his small family in 1958 made his way to Ronchi dei Legionari, where a friend of his lived. At first he worked on the railways, then with a Venetian hydroelectric company. They lived in a miniscule apartment with a room and kitchen: *but we were happy with the step taken, even if unfortunately I would have never again seen my father* – is his thought. Because of an unemployment crisis and having found out about the reopening of emigration to Canada, even the Dodichs chose to try that way. Including his brother Romano, who joined them, giving up the initial idea of migrating to Australia. It was the 17th April, 1960, when they climbed aboard the ship *Vulcania*, on its last voyage. *During the crossing we had fun, we were all young. We, however, knew that it would not have been easy afterwards. But we hoped for a good job, even if we hardly knew anything about Canada: we thought about it as a civilized, large, international country.* Fundamental upon the arrival was the support of the Canadian Catholic Mission, in connection with the Diocese of Trieste. After a first settling into a hotel and a few working days in a pigs farm, they were shifted to the vast farm of a Polish who cultivated tobacco: he welcomed them with so much familiarity and he was so sad, when at the end of the season the Dodichs moved to Toronto. Easy was the children's scholastic insertion, who in a shortwhile managed to express themselves fluently in English. It was not easy, instead, to settle into the big city: scarcity of work, savings had been spent in order to buy beds, they found themselves at Christmas Eve without any means. No support not even from the Assistance Office. Unforgettable then was the contribution that the family received from Father Sbrocchi, then at the parish of St. Clare – a sure reference point in the world of Italian emigration in Canada – who showed up at the door with two baskets of food. The solution arrived shortly after. *I remember that it was the 2nd February, 1961* – are Remigio's words – *when I began to work in a tannery.*

It consisted of a considerable commitment, even during holidays, but the salary was good: 1.68 dollars an hour. Even my wife worked in the sector for a while. With the employment situation having worsened after the strikes of the following year, his finally hired as a mechanic at the Ford plant, where he worked for 31 years. His wife, for about twenty years, worked in a supermarket, packaging butchery items.

5 times grandparents, today they declare themselves to be satisfied about their insertion into Canadian society, where they live well and have a nice group of friends.

Having returned many times to Isola, Remigio remembers with particular emotion the first time he saw his mother again: after 11 years, while taking out the bread from the wood oven. His father had passed away, after having sold his estates: amongst those who remained, there were no Italians in a position to buy them and so he sold them to the first buyer of the new regime, who had showed up at his door. *Still now*

my heart cries, but in those moments he was desperate. The London Agreement foresaw that within 12 months, whoever wanted to could leave with his own personal effects, the real estate would be paid in Italy – he highlights – without specifying how, when and who.

It is a thorn that still remains in Remigio's side, a tear that he cannot manage to sew up again, like the memory of Isola: *...do you know that its old name was Alieto?* – he concludes.

LUCIANA BRATOVICH in TESTA

Marked by the bombardments the family's roots in Zara, which her parents – then a young couple – had to abandon in 1943, moving to Trieste, where she was born in October of the following year. Origins which remained particularly dear to her mother, who always continued to replay *we are Dalmatians* to whoever asked her where she was from. Despite a good job at the Aquila refinery, her father in 1951 decided to share the Canadian adventure with a group of his friends. Accepted into the IRO lists, the Bratovichs moved to the waiting camp of Bremen: the parents and 5 children. With the father having left, the rest of the family remained there for 30 months waiting in vain for the recall. *One after another, we saw all of the people with whom we shared the camp leaving. In order to be able to earn some income, mom began to work in the laundry of the area. In the end, we went back to Trieste* – Luciana tells. The girls were accepted into the San Giuseppe orphanage in via dell'Istria, the boys into the Villaggio del Fanciullo of Opicina; the mother was assigned a small dwelling place. Declared a missing person at first, her father was then traced through a religious organization and the intervention of Father Bottizer, a very active priest in the Diocese of Trieste at the time. *Having resumed contact with dad by mail, I had found out that for a while he had worked in the forests of New Brunswick; then he had moved to Toronto. The reason for his behaviour had remained a mystery* – continues Luciana, who after having worked in the La Giuliana sweets factory in via Media, had been hired by Beltrame, a then glorious clothing store in Trieste. In 1960, her father's proposal to join him unleashed a violent conflict deep down inside her. A year later, with some sentimental disappointments probably being accomplices, she decided to accept his invitation. It was a disappointment for her mother – in the meantime having found a job at the Stock factory – who however supported her, wishing her to find her own wellness. She left for Toronto from the airport of Malpensa. A few weeks after her arrival, she turned to the Italian Consul

asking to be repatriated. *I was 17 years old. Nothing was according to my expectations. Dad had a new companion and worked at a car wash. I thought about my job, my friends and my life in Trieste with nostalgia. They advised me to give time to time and they found me a job as a babysitter with a German lady – the story continues.* The young Bratovich could not settle down. *I could not go back home because I did not have the money for the trip – she explains, even telling about the following job in a pastry shop.* A turn in her Canadian journey arrived at around the age of 22, after meeting her future husband: of Roman origin, he worked as a linotypist at the *Giornale Canadese*. Luciana went back to work in the clothing sector: she began by selling clothing imported from Italy to shops and to acquaintances during home sales. Until, at around the age of 27, she was able to open a her own successful store.

Both for her and for her husband in any case, the dream remained Italy. Luciana returned there for the first time after ten years: already during the train ride from Rome to Trieste, at the thought of returning home, she felt being overwhelmed by a wave of memories and trepidation. She wanted to surprise her mother, *who managed to overcome her emotions – she explains – because Dalmatians are like this. Since her death, however, I never went back to Italy. I do not know whether I have regrets or not, but I feel at home only in Toronto.*

BRUNO AND MARIA CASTRO

It is terrible to find oneself in a place that one does not know, but bit by bit the terrible things are forgotten. Words which summarize a bit the philosophy of life with which Bruno looks at the moment in which his journey of life, having been interrupted in Istria, began once again in Canada more than 40 years ago.

Born in 1932 at Pola – *under Italy*, he specifies – he lived his first years on Monte Paradiso. *They have now changed its name and call it Vidikovac – he adds.* With the family having moved to the famous naval shipyard of Scoglio Olivi, where his father worked as a pipe fitter for the Navy, he spent a few years there, marked by his spontaneous childhood carefreeness: *I learned to swim, falling into the water – he jokes.* The area, however, was a military base and in 1939 the Castros had to move to the Baracche. Bruno remembers it as a period of great fun and games in freedom, with the many friends that he had found there. In love with cars, he dreamed of being a driver when he would grow up. The happiness ended with the war, with the bombings of 1943 which destroyed their house forcing them to ask their friends for hospitality, with the alarms which interrupted classes and made them run to the air

raid shelters. *Then perhaps the recklessness of children would get the better part of us and at times we would go to the heights to look at the arrival of the airplanes and the bombings* – he tells. Having finished his scholastic preparation, in 1946 he went to work in the shipyard. His parents did not want to leave Pola: *dad wanted to stay in his own home, mindful of the experience he had after the First World War, when he went to look for work at Monfalcone* – he remembers. As soon as he reached the age to decide by himself, Bruno instead presented the option to be recognised as Italian. It was rejected for four times by the relevant offices, which classified him as being a Croatian by language. *I did not speak a word of it, but I had been forced to learn it, because I was sent to do military service at Nis, in Serbia. For 24 months* – he continues. Returning to Pola, and having become the foreman in the shipyard where he worked before, in 1963 he started a family with Maria Gheršin, a native of Parenzo, but who was raised at Dignano. *Splendid is the memory that I have of it* – explains the lady, joining in on the story. *If I could go back there as a girl... the games, my friends, the sea, the trips to the country. Even the little flowers there were special and I never found them again. Ours was a big family: my parents, 7 children, my grandparents. My father too worked at Scoglio Olivi. My town had not been hit too much by the war, as instead had happened to Pola.* Having completed her secondary school studies at the Italian school in Pola, the young girl had then found a job at the health assistance centre. Marking the postwar period were the many economic difficulties accompanied by the obligation to learn a language that she did not know. Changes and impositions made Pola empty itself more and more everyday. After their wedding, she and her husband too decided to escape to Italy. *Many were our friends who had escaped* – intervenes Bruno – *but I never had news about anyone ever since. No tranquillizing news went around about the fugitives that were intercepted.* In order to ease his escape plan, Castro went to work at Pirano, in zone B, where he could obtain the permit for the weekly transit over the border. Maria, who had a passport, pretended that she was going to visit a sister of hers in Trieste. She still remembers now the figure of her mother in tears, saying goodbye to her behind the glass of the window, concealing the final goodbye in the eyes of their neighbours.

During the stopover in the refugee camp of San Sabba in Trieste – in the well-known Risiera, with broken windows and the bora which blew violently – Bruno worked in the office accepting the new arrivals. His plan would have been to stay in Italy, but the disappointment of hearing himself being qualified as non-Italian, made him decide to emigrate. *But how, I had done everything possible in order to get back my Italian identity?!* – he is wandering still now. They were moved to Latina, where

Maria gave birth to little Astrid. The little girl was just 28 days old when in Naples they boarded the ship *Saturnia* heading to Canada. In Bruno's suitcase there was even a piece of shrapnel from the bomb which fell on his school – the Alessandro Manzoni – during the first air raid. A 7 day trip, the arrival in Halifax, the trip by train all the way to Toronto, the card around the neck with the destination: even for them the by now well-known routine repeated itself. He continued with the first precarious housing and the difficulties of adaptation. He improved with the learning of the English language, acquired both with the attendance of evening courses, and practising speaking with the people. His goal for a while was only the possibility of reimbursing the one-way ticket and to buy the return one. They did not want to stay in Canada, *but there was never enough money*. After a first job at a gas station – at 55 dollars a week – and subletting a dwelling place together with another 9 boarders, Bruno was able to resume his profession as an electromechanic. During those first moments it happened that nostalgia played a few tricks on Maria, making her notice resemblances of family members in people seen from afar. Everything began to settle bit by bit, even thanks to the rediscovered contacts with other Istrians in Canada. Finally they could speak the same language and share the same story. The dialect and story actively shared in these years even by the daughter Astrid, who continued to speak Italian even to her little daughter, now 10 years old. Astrid has travelled a lot, but she feels particularly attracted by the land of her parents. She regrets that people do not adequately know Istria and the painful history of its peoples. She also regrets not having a right to an Italian passport, though having been born in Italy.

The tie to Pola has, therefore, remained alive in the family and, almost every year, the Castros go to spend their holidays there. In the house of Monte Paradiso, where Bruno's sister still lives. *A house which saw my mother born under Austrian domination, my sister under Italian domination, the daughter of my sister under Yugoslav domination and her niece under Croatian domination* – is the final reflection.

CARLO BUCCI

A native of Fiume, born in April of 1929, he has already been referred to quite a few times in the previous pages: he is a part of the narrow circle of friends of Ermanno Mauro and he is the brother-in-law of the eldest of the two Rubessa sisters. With his parents, a brother and a sister, in Fiume he had first lived in via Tarsatica, then he moved to via Bellaria and to Adria palace. Continuing his family's seafaring tradition, his father worked on the Adriatic ships, until an accident mutilated one of

his hand forced him to leave the job on board, remaining however employed by the same Shipping Company. Going through the frames of his memory, Carlo's mind teems with his childhood memories: the songs in church, the soccer games organized by Father Cesare, the races on rollerskates from Fiume to Abbazia. Incredibly, he even had the opportunity to go down Monte Maggiore on skis all the way to the electric car tracks in Fiume, during an exceptional snowfall. His childhood melody wore out with the false notes of the war, when the repeated alarms would make him run to the bomb shelters – which were located close to the cemetery – even five times in one night. For the *mularia* (young boys) age would in any case helped to lighten the heavy weight of those moments: *in order to meet together at the exit of the bomb shelters we would use a conventional whistle* – he tells. Having finished his studies at the technical school, Carlo began to work as a carpenter, while another grey page was about to open up in his diary, or be it the postwar upheaval of Fiumian reality. In the framework of general economic crisis were inserted also melancholy and crying, which at the train station accompanied the goodbyes of those leaving, after their option were accepted. *We even sang forbidden songs, which Tito's regime did not want us to strike up* – he explains with a winking tone. *That, however, was the goodbye for the official departures, but then there were other people, who would say goodbye in secret, fleeing to Italy without permissions, despite the refused recognition of their Italianness on the part of Yugoslavia. And they really risked extreme consequences.* Carlo and his brother, who had married Loretta Maranzan's sister – as anticipated in the encounter with the lady – had also joined the group of fugitives. *Perhaps they held us back out of revenge for the fact that my father had decided to stay in his land. The regime instead preferred to get rid of the elderly and the mutilated rather than young blood* – was the consideration of Carlo, who during one of his escape attempts was captured and put into prison for six months: three months in Fiume, one night in Zagreb, the remaining period in an ironworks under forced labour, even if on the part of the government the sentence was not classified as such. He does not even remember if it had been the sixth or seventh time, when the escape turned out to be successful: with his brother and a friend, by buying the complicity of a sailor, he hid in the hold of a ship moored at the long pier, heading to Trieste on one of the upcoming days. The wait for the departure lasted five days, during which they remained hidden in the hold of the ship, with anxiety and the most absolute discomfort, without food: the man who had helped them climb aboard and who had assured them support, only provided them with one meal. He had disappeared, scared by the search for fugitives carried out by a police informer, who had tried in vain to sell his silence to the Bucci mother. Finally there was the

day in which, after a journey of 10 hours, they arrived at the port in Trieste. They reached freedom, lowering themselves during the night with a rope along the side of the ship and passing with simulated casualness in front of the checkpoint. In the city, the first thing that struck Carlo was the long line of gas stations: *in Fiume we only had two* – he explains. Having left the third travelling companion at the refugee camp, the two brothers headed for Rome by train, where they were expected and where they would have officialized their arrival. It was 1956. Ten years later Carlo reached his family members in Toronto, together with his Fiumian wife, married in the meantime. Leaving the airport, he was struck that time by the automatic doors, activated by sensors, and the enormous size of the roads and the huge cars. He immediately began to work: his brother did all he could to find him a good job and, in order to remedy his scarce knowledge of English, had even prepared for him the translation of a series of words pertaining to his profession. *I did not know the language, but I knew how to do my trade well* – he highlights. And, in fact, in the same fixture company where he began, he remained working for the entire time of his professional career, for well over 25 years. He became its director, by even signing two factory patents.

He returned on several occasions to Italy in these years, he saw Fiume again for the first time 23 years after his daring escape, still scared about eventual consequences of that far distant departure. But he never felt at home again.

Legally a Canadian citizen, he remains Italian and, particularly Fiumian, in the heart.

CLAUDIO AND DIANA GUGLIELMI

A Canadian story which began in Trieste, but which practically went around the world, with the most significant moments marked by the month of July. It is, in fact, in July of 1934 that Claudio was born in Trieste, the third sibling after two sisters. He was little more than one year old when from via del Rivo the family moved to via del Veltro, a basic reference point for his life in Trieste. *It was not a big house: a room, kitchen, small terrace and a toilet in the courtyard, that in the dark it was necessary to go with a candle; if the wind would blow it out I would run back into the house out of fear* – is the sweet childhood memory of his dwelling place, described in the dialect and with an uncontaminated cadence of Trieste. His father was a qualified glass worker and worked at the SATIV Company of Roiano, one of the most important companies in the town working in the glass sector. Having reached the third year of

professional school at the school in via Paolo Veronese, young Guglielmi thought about following in his father's footsteps: *they were difficult years and practically there were no alternatives* – he explains. Upon the advice of his cousin, he applied at the Beleno barracks to join the Civil Police Force, which was disbanded at the end of the Allied Military Government: *there was a continuous rebound of voices on the future re-employment of the people who had worked for the GMA, and certainly they were not the most promising. Only uncertainty was sure* – is the flashback of that period, in which even he allowed himself to be contaminated by the hypothesis of migrating to Australia, presented as the new eldorado by a hammering promotional campaign. It was once again July, when in 1955 he boarded the ship *Flaminia*, heading for Melbourne. His Australian period was very short, not sufficient enough in order to completely reimburse the cost of the ticket of the trip, paid in advance by the CIME (Intergovernmental Committee for European Migrations). After having worked for the railways, in the sector of the maintenance of trains and with a salary of 14 pounds, aboard the ship *Oceania* he returned to Trieste: *practically with the gratuity received as cerin* (wax match, nickname for the police officer of the GMA due to his helmet from the line similar to the caps of a wax match) *I paid off the round trip to Australia. Perhaps I even saw the pyramids* – he jokes, remembering the excursions made during the stopovers. There was Diana Rattini waiting for him upon his return: having met her just before the departure for Australia, it was love at first sight and during the time he was away he had exchanged letters with her on alternate days. She is his wife since 1958. An orphan having been raised in the Institute in via Pascoli, the lady has words of appreciation for the Organization which for ten years looked after her. *They all came out of there as good people* – she highlights. At the time she was working at the Beltrame Company, while Claudio, after having resumed his old job as a worker in a glass factory, found a job at the San Marco Shipyard. *The hiring letter arrived a few days before the one which would have opened up the doors for me at the ACEGAT* – he explains. *We finished the Raffaello ship* – he proudly highlights – *however, even the crisis arrived at our shipyard*. Diana thought about a better future for their Barbara, who was born in the meantime – then two and a half years old – when in a newspaper she read that in Canada there was a need for electrical welders. It was 1966, and July once again, when on a day in which it was pouring cats and dogs they said goodbye to Trieste. The bad weather did not allow them to board the airplane at the Ronchi airport and they reached Milan by train, where they were forced to stay there for a few days before being able to embark for the transatlantic flight. The calm conduct of the Guglielmis in facing the setback, in stark contrast with the exuberant uneasiness of the other passengers, was rewarded

by the head clerk, who allowed them to get onto the plane with their trunk. It was 11:30 in the evening when, after having stopped over in Montreal, they arrived in Toronto. That was not the city which right from the beginning they had chosen, when they had passed the admission selection at the Canadian Consulate in Milan. They had then instinctively preferred Vancouver, due to its position by the sea. They had then changed the request, upon the advice of a friend residing in Toronto who, having found out about their arrival in Canada, offered himself as a reference point in order to welcome them. In fact, they did not know all that much about Canada. *We only knew that it was very cold and they said that one would walk on pieces of wood* – they specified. Before leaving, they had sold whatever they had, except for their clothes, linen and ...two coffee makers. *This upon the advice of a friend, who had told me about the coffee that was drunk beyond the ocean. Of course every single thing that was sold caused a certain emotion* – explains Diana, who in any case prepared herself for the departure more determined than her husband. A small S. Antonio plastic statue, purchased on the occasion of a visit to the shrine in Padova, is still kept in Claudio's pocket. Positive was the first impression of Canada, when upon their arrival at the airport an immigration officer gave the small family a 15 dollar cheque, as a monthly contribution towards their daughter. The assimilation into the new reality however, as happened almost always, was not easy. After a temporary settling with the mentioned friends from Trieste, the first apartment that they lived in was in a small house shared with some Calabrians. The landlord, who had just finished painting the gutters, thought that it would have been a good idea using the leftover paint, to paint the kitchen of the new arrivals: with dark green lead paint. *Luckily we went away quickly from that house, otherwise I don't know what consequences there would have been for our health* – is the present consideration. In parallel, there were also the difficulties for the employments opportunities: few, occasional, far and poorly paid. In a short while Claudio lost more than 10 kilos, so much so that the insurance agent with whom he had signed a life insurance policy in favour of his family members, cancelled the contract. The first Christmas particularly turned out to be sad: *it was the evening of the eve, the house was empty, because we had only bought the bedroom furniture; 4 dishes and 4 glasses were the kitchen's furnishings. Without the tree. We began to cry* – tells Diana, remembering small Barbara who would ask their parents to explain why they were crying. It was a Sicilian, met a few days before, who unforgettably remedied that situation by knocking at their door at nine o'clock that evening in order to invite them to lunch the following day. Welcomed with great warmth into his home, all the guests, having found out about their critical situation, got down to giving them every basic necessity that they were in need of.

In the experience of the most varied jobs which Claudio ended up facing, for a certain period there was even the one in a butcher shop: close to home, paid very well, but unbearably gruesome. Having gone over to the Swift Company, a colossal American delicatessen company, the man reached the most gloomy depression when after seven months of precariousness he found himself unemployed for the first time. He thought about his responsibilities as the head of the family, about the unequal comparison which he would have had to face in the future and with a reality that was practically unknown to him. Shortly after, luck provided him with the jolt in order to uplift the situation, allowing him to take a two year English course, with a 68 dollar a week scholarship. With the course of things having changed, he was permanently hired at the Ford plant. After 17 years at the assembly line and successive promotions, Guglielmi retired with the position of production inspector. His entry into the Ford plant even coincided with the purchase of his first car, which he still remembers with enthusiasm: *a Ford Custom, 8 cylinders, 189 horsepower, a nice light yellow, big.*

On Saturdays, for ten years, Claudio integrated his factory job with a second job, arriving almost as a joke, when at a dinner dance he offered his help as a waiter at a catering service, run by a Friulian lady. In the end he found himself promoted as head waiter. Those incomes helped to strengthen the small sum of savings, put aside in order to be able to see Trieste again. The Guglielmis returned there for the first time in 1977.

I could not even sleep thinking that I was going back home – tells Diana. And it was memorable. Now we practically return every year for five months. A strong bond with one's own roots, handed down even to Barbara – married to a Greek, who understands the dialect of Trieste, and twice a mother – and to her brother born in Canada.

ELENA CAPUTI widow BANINI

My city was very beautiful, clean, a jewel of Italy: runs along the tracks of the memory the image of Zara, the birthplace of Elena. She had returned there as an adolescent at the outbreak of the war, after three years in the nuns' institute. Almost at the same time a pneumonia had taken away her dad. Her family consisted of her mother and two brothers. *The war, which up until November of 1943 had not particularly marked us, exploded then into furious bombardments, day and night,*

which forced us to take refuge in the nearby Borgo Erizzo – is the story, accompanied by the memories of the terrible images of mangled bodies during the course of the incursions, of the small voice of a little girl in search of help after an explosion had mutilated her leg, of the priest who intervened to help her out. The prompt reaction of her brother saved her life twice. She above all remembers with gratitude the big slap that he gave waking her up, when he went back to get her: after the sounding of the alarm she did not want to go with her family members to the air raid shelter, but had gone back to sleep again. Upon the return from the air raid shelter, they had found their house bombed. In April 1944, the Caputis reached Trieste, where they were lodged into *the so-called refugees' school*, in the area of San Giovanni. After three months locked up in the refuge, that dwelling place – though as if precarious – made them feel as if they were in paradise: there was a hot meal on a dish, a glass of wine for her mother. With them was even Elena's fiancé, a native of Borgo Erizzo, met while they were still children. In that very same month they got married in the church of San Giovanni, where 50 years later they returned to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary.

Having found themselves as refugees at the end of the war, they were first moved to the welcoming camp in Padova and then to the one in Mantova. Initially a store-keeper in the area, her husband later found a job in Milano, while her brothers went back to work in Trieste. With emigration open through the IRO, in 1951 the young Banini couple decided to take the opportunity to move to Norway. For Elena, Zara remained in her memory: *it was not the city of my old days, there were no longer its gardens, its people*. In Oslo, she began working as a seamstress, putting the sewing lessons learnt from the nuns, during the years in their convent, to good use. Helping her was a Serb immigrant, who had been introduced to her by a native of Zara residing in Norway. *How many years were you a seamstress for?* – asked the owner of the shop who she had been introduced to. *Three years, but it has been ten years that I have not been working* – was Elena's response. The translation of her friend was actually the opposite: *she worked for ten years, but it has been three years that she has not been working*. She was hired by one of the most important tailor shops in the capital – the Hesteevev Company – which makes evening gowns for the Norwegian royal household. Her ability and her industrious nature did not live room for recriminations. At the same time the young woman found adequate support in order to resume her business studies, which she brilliantly finished, integrating them with the learning of Norwegian and typing. Once having obtained her accounting diploma, she was hired by a bank, where she worked for twelve years, until her brothers' visit, who in the meantime had moved to Canada, who asked her family members to join

them. After a brief consultation with her husband, with great courage the couple decided to begin a new life beyond the ocean. It was 1968. *We were lucky, because my husband immediately found a job in a big food distribution company, while I entered an important insurance company, where I worked for 22 years. We immediately found ourselves well in Canada, with its big wide open spaces and its good manners, which gives you a right dimension of life. I continue to feel Italian and to love Italy, but I feel at home in Canada* – Mrs. Banini concludes.

A widow for a few years now, her son now lives in Norway, her daughter-in-law's land of origin. A grandmother of three grandchildren and great grandmother of five great grandchildren, for Elena being in contact with friends and family members in every latitude and longitude falls into the norm. An admirable family, which has chosen the world as its own address, without problems of different languages and cultures, with a spirit of adaptation, tenacity and will. The results are evident today.

Events of people who, like leaves in the wind, were able to settle in a country which turned the leaf into its own symbol.

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