Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Displaced
Dragoslav Jurisich
CreateSpace
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Displaced chronicles Dragoslav "Lali" Jurisich's life as he moves from his war-torn homeland of Communist Serbia, to South America, and then to Canada. Although the book's primary purpose is to fulfill a promise to one of Jurisich's young descendants, there is much to enjoy in this autobiography for readers outside his family. Readers come to know his immediate and extended families, thus putting a human face on European immigration, persecution, and tyranny. Much of the book takes place in Yugoslavia during World War II, and the years immediately following the conflict. Many American readers will be surprised to learn the Germans subjected Serbs to inhumane treatment similar to what the Jews endured during the war. Serbian men were massacred, and many other Serbs were sent to work camps.

As Jurisich navigates the dangers of his occupied country with a mixture of skill and naivete, he uses strong dialog and vivid imagery to bring the audience back to the innocence and terror of a youth growing up in an invaded homeland. After the war, the new atheistic Yugoslavian regime brings new trials and tribulations for Jurisich's devout family. Readers feel the pull of something larger and more ominous than peer pressure and fear for Jurisich, as he dares to challenge the Communists' denunciation of his brother, and fights arm-twisting by local commanders to join the youth wing of the ruling party. In poignant language, Jurisich searches for his moral compass, as his young mind tries to reconcile his faith in God with the lies he has told and the atrocities he has witnessed. The author often pulls away from his familial narrative to explain the larger political milieu of each era. Such context, however, will only make sense to serious history scholars; lay readers may find themselves lost.

Once Jurisich escapes to South America and reunites with his long-lost father, the narrative abruptly switches from third person to first person, and Jurisich is now referred to by his given name. This transition between names gives readers a jolt. Also jarring is the author's

tendency to translate foreign words in parentheses immediately following the italicized foreign phrase. Given the number of different languages spoken, these italicized phrases eventually become overwhelming and daunting. (Some of the French words are misspelled.) Despite all the italics, Jurisich's delightful descriptions of flora, fauna, and architecture will transport readers to each stop along his journey. At 600-plus pages, *Displaced* will appeal most to lovers of Serbian history, World War II survival stories, and multi-generational family sagas.

Jill Allen