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For Solo Violin: A Jewish Childhood in Fascist Italy

Aldo Zargani
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More than three thousand

memoirs by Holocaust survivors have been published. After a long silence, those who lived through the horrors of Nazi brutality now seem to be almost frantically rushing to preserve the dire tale of their suffering before they pass from the scene. Their published recollections represent a determined effort to prevent a repetition of this unspeakable tragedy. This author contributes an important addition to the library of Holocaust literature. In 1995, when he was sixty-two years old, he recorded his memories of what happened to him and his family as a legacy for his four-year-old grandson.

Originally written in Italian, the book was recently translated so as to make the story accessible to English-speaking readers. Zargani's account focuses on how Jews fared in Italy under Mussolini and under German occupation during the period from 1938 to 1945. Zargani, his younger brother, and his parents all managed to survive, although many of their relatives were included among the one-third of Italian Jewry who were killed. The harrowing experiences of the author and his immediate family are recounted in heart-rending detail. Zargani's father, a violinist, was banned from employment because of his Jewish identification. The family became dependent on the kindness of others-both for food and for protection from the Fascists and the Nazis who were persecuting Jews. The family tried in vain to find asylum in Switzerland and then began to move from place to place, finally winding up with a band of Italian partisans. Zargani and his brother were hidden for a time in a Catholic boarding school.

The author eventually worked for the Italian broadcasting network as director of Journalistic Services and Radio Programming. He now lives and writes in Rome, and has published a second memoir since For Solo Violin won several literary awards in Italy.

Because the saga of Italian Jews during the Holocaust is less well known than the stories about German, Austrian, and East European Jews, this frightful narrative augments our understanding of a horrible era in human history.

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