

# **THE FIDAO FAMILY**

by

**GIUSEPPE (JOE) FIDAO**

**Genoa, December 15, 1992**

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## INTRODUCTION

It is my deep regret to see that my ancestors, after having settled in Turkey, did not bother to give their descendants any historical mention of our family, its origins, the personality of its members.

So I decided to leave to my own descendants not only the result of my efforts to find that little material that I managed to put together on the Family, contained in this binder, but also to leave ample testimony of myself: let this be an incentive to overcome me for those who will consider my performance inadequate or mediocre, or incitement for those who will find some inspiration to imitate.

It is my intention to make two copies of this collection, one for Viviana and one for Beatrice. I hope that Swika and Pitzuka will want to continue this genealogical work, and so will their descendants. To me, who have been deprived of it, it seems that it should be a source of inspiration, meditation and satisfaction to possess a seamless collection of one's ancestors who now sleep in the eternal sleep of the righteous.

I bless you all as I love you: from the deepest of my soul!



GIUSEPPE (JOE) FIDAO - 1912.

Genoa, October 1991

Delivered: 15.12.92.

### **P.S. BY VIVIANA**

*I believe it was a heritage from original times in Turkey and Greece to give nicknames to close family members. They are mostly terms of endearment.*

*Solange: Pussy, Pussika, Pussikaki, Solangizza*

*Viviana: Swiky Swika, Swikaki, Sissina, Sissinaki*

*Beatrice: Pitzuk, Pitzuka, Pitzukaki*

*Papà: Daddy*

*Bisnonno: Papiky*

*Aunt Maria Magdalena: Peach, Peachy*

*Aunt Marie: Mariechen, the Zizikia (Maria and Riri)*

## THE FIDAO FAMILY

Written by Giuseppe Fidao  
(1912 - 2002)

As in Family Tree (see Attachment 1), our branch of the Family descends from Charles Fidao and we can see that we can count eight generations bearing our last name and that currently the heirs to the name are Alden S. Fidao (1951) and Lloyd S. Fidao (1954) both residing in the United States. Another heir to the name Fidao is Roland Fidao (1956) currently residing in England. He is descended from another branch of the Family, that of Frederic Fidao (1839).

Today there are Fidaos in Grado and Argentina, with both of whom I had an exchange of correspondence. It is practically certain that with them we are descendants of a common ancestor, but it is not known at what point and at what time the two branches come together to form a single strain.

The work of finding personal data has been made very difficult because most of the archives in municipalities, parishes, etc. in the north-east of Italy was destroyed during the World War I. This makes it impossible to trace beyond a certain date.

Thus, as far as our branch of the family is concerned it is not possible to go back beyond Andrea Fidao and his spouse Antonia, whose surname remains unknown to us.

Originally, the Nationality of the Fidao was Austrian because [Monfalcone](#) and [Grado](#) were part of the Austro-Hungarian kingdom until the end of World War I in 1918. In 1918 Monfalcone and Grado moved to Italy.

At that time, my father Joseph Fidao (1882) who, as mentioned, was of Austrian nationality (I was therefore also born Austrian) and lived with his family in Constantinople (today Istanbul), was ordered by the Allied authorities (English - French - Italian) stationed in the city, to leave Turkey, which had lost the war as an ally of Germany and Austria, unless he assumed Italian nationality.

Since my father had settled in Turkey where he worked, and that the Fidao although of Austrian nationality, were the Italians of culture, tradition and language (Andrea Fidao - 1803 - when he came to [Smyrna](#) spoke only Italian, and so did his many children born in Smyrna) my father opted for Italian nationality and so we stayed in Constantinople.

His brother Charles (1870) found himself in the same situation and he also chose the Italian nationality.

As for Christian (1874) and Emile (1875) they were in France at that time for study and took French nationality, while Maxime (1882) my father's twin brother (1882) had settled in the United States and had taken American citizenship.

In his notes on the Fidao Family, my cousin Richard Fidao says that he turned to Encyclopedia Britannica about the origin of the name Fidao, and that they answered by stating that the name Fidao derives from the word "trusted" as in Grado dialect the letter "t" is deleted in the past participle. Richard Fidao's notes also report - among other things - that the Fidao are of Ladin origin (see his notes for more details).

The first Fidao to settle in Smyrna, Turkey was Andrea Fidao (1803) who visited that country on business and stayed there, getting married, becoming the founder of a family that grew and prospered there for four generations.

At that time much of Asia Minor, including Smyrna, was occupied by the Greeks and it was not until 9 September 1922 that the Turks reoccupied the whole of Asia Minor and expelled the Greeks, entering, triumphant in the last cornerstone in the hands of the Greeks: the city of Smyrna.

The city was burned down and looted by the Turks and a large part of the Christian and foreign population, who had settled there for a long time, had to flee to take shelter; many on the ships of the Allies (English - French - Italians) at anchorage in the bay of Smyrna.

However, for many years, until the fire of Smyrna<sup>1</sup>, a large number of foreigners had foreign trade in their hands because the Turks were not up to the task and did not have the necessary confidence from European and American traders, and that is how considerable fortunes were created in the hands of many foreigners of all nationalities.

Most of the agricultural products of the fertile Turkish soil were exported, such as dried fruits (the famous Smyrna figs and the no less famous "uva sultanina" (dried raisins), cotton, tobacco, olive oil, making considerable profits in particular because of the low cost of Turkish labor at that time, when the word "labor unions" was completely unknown.

These many foreign residents lived, rather carefree, in a cosmopolitan atmosphere with their many clubs, somewhat like in the colonies. The language mainly spoken was French, thanks to the numerous French religious schools of "frères" and "sœurs", although English was also quite widespread in Bournabat (now [Bornova](#)) and Boudja (two centers on the outskirts of Smyrna with a greater concentration of English residents).

After the interlude of the fire in Smyrna in 1922, foreign residents resumed their commercial and industrial activities, but the Turkish government became increasingly obstructive on foreigners by favoring their citizens, with the result that a considerable part of the business passed to the latter.

Today there are relatively few foreign residents in Smyrna and there is a tendency among them to take Turkish nationality while the tendency for mixed marriages with Turkish citizens is more common.

The Fidaos have contracted marriage to the nobility twice.

Count Giuseppe Valentinis, nobleman of a patrician family of Monfalcone, married Antonia Fidao on 15 September 1844. He was twenty-five, she was thirty-two.

The second case was that of the wedding of Charles Fidao (1838) my grandfather, with the Marquise Maria Giustiniani, celebrated in Smyrna.

Twins have been frequent in the Fidao family: Rudolph and Frederic (1905), Joseph and Maxime (1882), Maxime and Lloyd (1911).

For news about the Frederic Fidao branch (1839) see the notes by Richard Fidao (1915).

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_fire\\_of\\_Smyrna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_fire_of_Smyrna)

## ANDREA FIDAO

He was the first Fidao to settle in Turkey.

Almost certainly he came from a family of shipowners from Monfalcone, and this fact must have facilitated his expatriation, following the tradition of many Venetians who for centuries went to the countries and islands of eastern Mediterranean to establish prosperous communities there.

The Ottoman Empire, at that time, was called "the sick man of Europe" because of its backwardness, a status that today would be called an "underdeveloped country".

For foreigners who went there, Turkey had numerous attractions and advantages.

First, the abundance and quality of its agricultural products.

Second, the fact that the Turks at the time ignored the trade practices in use in the more advanced countries, where indigenous traders received no credence.

The lack of indigenous technicians also attracted foreign competent labor. Any work of some importance was entrusted to foreign technicians.

Finally, in trade, which consisted mainly in export of Turkish agricultural products, the low cost of local labor allowed considerable gains.

Andrea Fidao arrived in Smyrna around 1833, and settled at the guesthouse owned by Mrs. Constance Mirzan, probably stateless, but Catholic, whom he soon married.

My great-grandfather's photograph is that of a handsome man in his 60s, with a benevolent but authoritarian gaze: of one who is used to command.

With the help of a magnifying-glass you will notice that he wears his wedding ring on the right hand, which is very strange since he was Catholic.

You will also notice the exceptional length of his right little finger, a characteristic that has been reproduced, after four generations, in the hands of Philip Brusick (1946) son of my sister Maria Fidao (1911), currently residing in Geneva.

Andrea Fidao did not bother to say almost anything about his ancestors or the origins of the Family (Monfalcone or Grado). So much so that several of his descendants, wanting to know more about it, had to undertake studies with considerable expense of money (travel, research, documents, etc.) and whose rather meagre results (mainly because during World War I most of the civil and Parrish archives have been destroyed) are contained in this dossier.



The following laconic words can be read on the tomb of Andrea Fidao in the cemetery of Smyrna:

**ANDREA FIDAO**

**Né à Monfalcone, Autriche - 1803**

**Décédé à Smirne – 1871**

## CHARLES FIDAO (1838)

I don't know much about my grandfather other than some random reference or memory of his children or grandchildren, that have been reported to me.

Those who have known him are unanimous on the fact that he was a man of Church, extremely rigid in his principles inspired by the Catholic religion that he observed scrupulously, and that he ill-tolerated deviations from these principles both for himself and others, even when it came to behaviors arising from youthful enthusiasm about which he was not very lenient.

I reported elsewhere how my father and his twin Max at ten wore a second pair of woolly underpants when they brought home bad grades, knowing that their father would whip them with his flexible cane.

His daughters (Marie, Louise, Fernande and Margherite) were obviously docile and affectionate, and his poems were devoted (among family members) only to them.



The fact that almost all male children have left their father's home as soon as they reached the age of majority would indicate a certain resentment for their father's excessive severity.

Every thought, action and opinion of grandfather seems to have been inspired by religious faith, as evidenced in his poems.

It is therefore likely that the desertion of her (Catholic) husband by his daughter Marie, to go and live with her Protestant admirer, Harold Giraud, generated a profound trauma in grandfather, who judged it from the dual aspect of adultery and abjure.

Another blow, similar to the first, was that of my father who married a German, Protestant girl, although their children (my sisters Mary, Mary Magdalene and I) were baptized in the Catholic faith. When my mother converted to Catholicism, grandfather had already been dead for a couple of years.

Some of grandfather's poems are beautiful.

One of them "Fable: Le Vent et le Nuage"- bears the annotation: "Mention "Très Bien" au Concours de Poesie du Bulletin de la Jeunesse de Paris", which is no small feat.

My favorite poem is "La Mémoire" which, by the way, suggests that his religious faith has not been totally free of problems.

One wonders how a person who has always lived in Turkey (I am not aware that he has stayed in France at all) was able to possess the French language in such a way that he wrote poems of excellent workmanship, which requires a deep knowledge of the language.

The credit must undoubtedly be given to the French religious schools which were numerous throughout the Middle East. These schools, frequented by the majority of young foreigners also from Smyrna, also instilled patriotic love towards France.

This is evident in grandfather's poem "1870", the year in which France, under Napoleon III, was defeated at Sedan by the Prussian armies, a victory that initiated the unification of Germany.

It is surprising not only that grandfather's poems are dedicated, among his family members, only to his daughters, but also that he ignores his wife.

The only reference to the family in his poems is in the one composed for a toast aboard a ship, which begins with the words: "Souffrez mes chers amis..." and that ends, perhaps more out of need for rhyme, with a reference to "tendres foyers".

Grandfather's eldest daughter, Marie, reported that her mother "était dominée par son mari, mais c'était une femme chaleureuse et compréhensive" (was dominated by her husband, but she was a warm and understanding woman).

At that time her husband was considered the undisputed leader of the family and many marriages were "arranged".

This was certainly the case with grandma and grandfather.

One of his poems ("A' mon cher ami Christophe Apack") shows that almost every night after work, grandfather went to the club for his game of billiards. In these circumstances his wife was probably relegated home to take care of the many children, although at that time there was abundance of servants.

It cannot be excluded that the Giustiniani, a noble family, stressed grandfather with the fact that he was not one, and that this had an influence on marital relations.

On the other hand (these are all speculations) one can attempt an explanation of the words "chaleureuse et compréhensive" referred, as above, by my aunt, in presuming that grandmother possessed a remarkable emotional tendency (proof of which would be the nine children she had) but that she bowed with understanding to the self-discipline that her husband, all devoted to religion, imposed on himself in various circumstances.

Grandfather was a partner, with his brother-in-law, in the company N. Giustiniani & Fils (exports) and also held the position of secretary of the best known and prestigious circle of Smyrna, the "Cercle Européen", a position certainly conferred on him because of his well-known moral rightness.

Although grandfather was the typical patriarchal head of the family who dominated his offspring iron-handed, he does not seem to have been insensitive - or worse, bad - at all, quite the contrary. Nor does it seem that his religious fervor was entirely free of spiritual problems.

He seems to have inspired two marked and opposing tendencies in his children; one inspired by their father's religious faith (notably Charles (1870), Christian (1874) and Louise (1879); the other atheist, though not militant, in particular, Emile (1875), Joseph and Maxime (1882).

My grandfather was a friend of the Catholic bishop of Smyrna and once, when he was visiting his friend Charles, my father (then a little boy) was behind the living room door and heard his father and the bishop talk about the possibility of assigning one of the children to religious vows, as was the tradition in many Catholic families.

My grandfather said, "Yes, my son Joseph."

This circumstance evidently created a sense of rebellion in my father (what right do they have to dispose of my life without consulting me?) that remained in him all his life.

When my mother converted to Catholicism, an absurd situation was created. While her husband, who was born catholic, was indifferent to religion, his wife, became the pillar of catholic faith in the family: practicing herself, she raised my sister and me in the observance of our religion precepts.

Therewith, when my mother died, my sister found several times my father absorbed in prayer. He could only pray for the soul of his beloved Dagmar.

Going back to grandfather, shortly before his death he would have predicted the fire of Smyrna in which thousands of people perished and many wealthy families were reduced to poverty.

At night, shortly before the fire, he would cry out in his sleep: "Run away, the city is burning!".

A brief description of each of Charles Fidao's (1838) nine children follows. They were not common people.

### **CHARLES (1870)**

He was the eldest son and his wife Henriette Varipati bore him seven children, two of whom died at an early age, (very frequent at the time) while the third, Marcel, will be remembered for his large head, due to the meningitis contracted thanks to the negligence of his nanny. The remaining children, Germaine, Simone, Raymonde and Christiane will be remembered in particular for their beauty. Their father was imbued with his father's religious faith.

### **MARIE (1872)**

She was married by her parents to Edgar Aliotti of Smyrna at the age of eighteen and, as it often happens in such circumstances, she was very unhappy.

It happened that a handsome intrepid young man named Harry Giraud, of French nationality but of English education (born in Smyrna) kidnapped her.

Her father Charles (1838) was so upset that he closed his house to visitors and publicly repudiated his daughter.

Shortly before the fire in Smyrna grandfather was ill, without means and a little out of his mind given his advanced age, and despite the anathemas at his daughter's address, she welcomed him lovingly to her home in Bornova, treated him with affection and devotion until his death.

Marie lived with Harry (1871) until his death: they had three children of which only Harry is alive – he resides in Geneva and I am in correspondence with him (as of 1972). At the age of 80, and certainly on her own initiative, the two married in Bornova Catholic Church.

### **CHRISTIAN (1874)**

He migrated to France and although he had never become a priest, he devoted his whole life to the poor and needy.

He once told me that he thought he could make himself much more useful as a layman than by adhering to a religious order.

He lived among the poor in the slums of Paris to whom he gave all his income and property, cared for their sick, collected offerings for the poor from the rich, organized pilgrimages to the Lourdes Sanctuary.

In the poor neighborhoods of Paris he was known as "the saint of Paris." He died in a monastery in Rome in 1945.

## EMILE (1875)

He settled in France and graduated from the University of Lille.

In Paris he had close relations with the literary circles of the capital and soon became a writer of reputation; several of his works were "crowned" by the French Academy, the highest recognition for a literary work. These include: "Qu'est-ce-qu'un Classique?", "Essai d'Histoire et de Critique Positive", a biography of Richelieu "Richelieu Précepteur de la Nation Française" (Charles Fidao's Poems) and finally "Discours sur la Raison Classique."



## MARGHERITE (1877) AND FERNANDE (1880).

I don't have relevant details about these two aunts of mine apart from the fact that Fernande, who was beautiful (see group photo with her father and mother) but evidently also vain, died following an overly violent slimming treatment that caused her tuberculosis.

## LOUISE (1879)

She became a nun (in the Order of the Sœurs de Charité) at the age of twenty-eight - see her father's poem written for the occasion - and since then she dedicated her life to caring for the sick.

Her order moved her to France where she took French nationality. Shortly thereafter she was sent to Beirut and Damascus (then French protectorates) where she became director of the local French hospital.

In 1955 Louise was decorated by President Charles de Gaulle with the Legion of Honor for distinguishing herself in caring for French (and non-French) citizens in the Middle East, for many years. She died in Beirut in 1956.

This is a photograph of her with my cousin Simone Lane (daughter of Charles Fidao 1870). Her resemblance to my father (Joseph Fidao - 1882) is remarkable.



## JOSEPH AND MAXIME<sup>2</sup> (1882)

They were twins, the second being the youngest of the two being born last. The resemblance between the two was so great that at the time of baptism a red ribbon was sewn on the garments of one and a blue one on those of the other to distinguish them.

The twins soon became a very lively couple, always ready to kid and joke, generally at the expense of studying.

When, at the end of the school period, they brought bad grades home, the two were whipped properly by the strict father who chased them in the garden with his flexible rod. But the twins resorted to a gimmick: after a couple of beatings, they wore a second pair of woolly underpants before presenting the bad grades, knowing the punishment that awaited them.

They were also involved in scuffle, as is convenient for young males.

Once, having defied a brawler too quickly, as this proved more difficult than they expected, they cautiously folded and saved face telling him that they would give him a

<sup>2</sup> Maxime's memoires were not included in Joe's book and added as an [addendum](#)

good lesson the next day at four, knowing full well that at three o'clock they would leave on holiday with their family.

Their mother, the Marquise, was very greedy. She had a cupboard all stuffed with sweets and pastry such as lokkums, baklava, kadaif, halva, etc. but there was also a bottle of castor oil in the closet and despite the closet being diligently locked, the twins were able to open it during the hours of the afternoon siesta.

Once each of them ate a whole box of pistachio lokkums and, as a precaution, they drank a large sip of castor oil, apparently without any particular side-effect.

At twenty, one of the twins' most funny amusements was courting each other's girlfriend after getting their act together.

The remarkable similarity of the twins continued in mature age despite many years of separation, residence in different climates and different living conditions.

Once, in the Paris Metro, an American gentleman greeted my father by saying, "Hello Max, how come you haven't left for America yet?". When my father explained that he was Max's twin brother, Max's friend burst into a roaring laugh, exclaiming, "Always ready to joke, Max!". It took a lot of persuasion to convince Max's friend that my father was just his brother. With much reluctance and suspicion, he finally let go of Dad's arm, following us with an incredulous look.

Another episode I remember, again about the similarity between the twins, was when mom, Maria and I went to Mulhouse to join Dad who was in Basel for his kidney surgery.

Upon arriving at Basel station, Dad came to meet us with his arms open, but Mom broke away and said, "You're not Joe, you're Max." Mom knew about the jokes that twins used to play as young people with their girlfriends, and it was only when, repeatedly interrogating him on the location of certain items in our house in Constantinople, that Mom was convinced that it was actually dad.



Lloyd, Max Senior, Max Junior (Jay)

# **CHARLES FIDAO'S POEMS**

## À BOUDIA

Un pauvre curé de village  
privé de sous et d'apanage  
prenait toujours ses deux repas  
tantôt chez l'un, tantôt chez l'autre  
Ainsi vivait ce saint apôtre  
sans frais et sans trop d'embarras.

Une fois, c'était un Dimanche,  
il comptait prendre sa revanche  
de son jeune du Samedi  
Il était plein de confiance  
attendant avec patience  
que sa montre marquât midi.

Voilà pourtant midi qui sonne  
il ne voit paraître personne  
qui l'invitât à déjeuner.  
Mais il se disait en lui-même:  
si je trouvais un stratagème  
pourquoi donc tant me chagriner?

Il arpentait son presbytère  
lisant tantôt son bréviaire  
tantôt tenant sa montre en main.  
Pourtant nul ne venait encore  
il avait la faim qui dévore  
il attendait toujours en vain.

Ca lui paraissait fort étrange!  
Il faut cependant que je mange  
sans cela je mourrai de faim.  
Il paraît donc que mes ouailles  
ne songent plus à mes entrailles  
ils oublient que j'existe enfin.

Ah! Ça dit-il ouaille ingrate  
Je vais te faire une sonate  
qui te fera penser à moi.  
Et de la cloche il prend la corde  
il sonne sans miséricorde  
et met le village en émoi.

Chacun se dit pour qu'à cette heure  
notre curé dans sa demeure  
fasse retentir le tocsin,  
c'est une triste alternative.  
On s'empresse, on court, on arrive  
Et lui souriait, le malin.

Bon père, votre cloche sonne  
et ce n'est pas l'heure du Prone  
arrive-t-il quelque malheur?  
Non mes enfants tout est en place  
si je sonne c'est que je chasse  
de la faim, le grand tentateur.

Chacun comprend et vite vite  
de tous les cotés on l'invite  
chacun se le disputait enfin!  
Mes enfants dit-il, sans la cloche  
vous encourriez tous le reproche  
de m'avoir vu mourir de faim.

## **CANTIQUE "NUNC DIMITTIS"**

Maintenant ô Seigneur, selon votre parole  
laissez mourir en paix votre humble serviteur.  
Mes yeux ont enfin vu dans sa sainte auréole  
le gracieux enfant, mon maître et mon sauveur.  
Vous nous l'avez donné ce rédempteur du monde,  
Seigneur, pour éclairer peuples et nations  
de sa lumière pure, éclatante et féconde,  
pour le manifester aux générations.  
Soyez béni, mon Dieu, d'avoir donné ce gage  
de votre amour pour l'homme, au peuple d'Israël.  
La gloire luit sur nous, aux rayons du visage  
du radieux enfant qui nous ouvre le Ciel.

## **EGLISE - EUCHARISTIE**

J'entre et mes yeux cherchent la lampe sainte  
Qui toujours veille auprès du Roi des rois,  
Je suis saisi de respect et de crainte  
Je me prosterne et je dis: oui je crois.

Je crois, Seigneur, que dans vos tabernacles  
Vous résidez tout prêt à nous bénir  
C'est là pour nous le plus grand des miracles  
le plus touchant, le plus doux souvenir.

Ah! Qu'il est beau d'avoir reçu pour gage  
de votre amour un don si précieux!  
Car prosternés, non devant une image  
mais devant vous, Seigneur, c'est le bonheur des Cieux.

## LA CROIX

La croix! Source féconde  
d'amour et de vertus,  
resplendit dans le monde  
au doux nom de Jésus !

O suprêmes douleurs du plus dur des martyres  
Mort sublime d'un Dieu, mourant comme un agneau  
Vous avez par la croix brisé les vieux empires  
Et levé l'étendard du bien, du vrai, du beau.

Arbre plein d'espérance  
Ruche de charité.  
Tu calmes les souffrances  
de notre humanité.

Lumière pure et sainte  
sur ce gibet royal  
Tu meures sans une plainte  
Tu pardonnes le mal.

Tu donnes à ta mère  
Le monde pour son fils,  
Égide tutélaire  
Plus pur que le lys.  
Salut ô croix adorable  
Montre toi sensible à mes vœux  
Par tes vertus, ô Vierge incomparable  
Obtiens-moi de Jésus, d'aller un jour aux Cieux,

LA CROIX  
(Original Version)

- 4 -

La croix! Source féconde  
d'amour et de vertus,  
qui pleure dans le monde  
au long jour de Jésus!

O Suprêmes douleurs du plus dur des martyres!  
Mort sublime d'un Dieu, mourant comme un agneau,  
sans orgueil, par la croix, brisé les vieux empires  
et levé l'étendard, du bien, du vrai, du beau.

Arbre plein d'espérance  
Rocbe de charité  
tu calmes les souffrances  
de notre humanité.  
Lumière pure et sainte  
dev ce gibet royal  
tu nous sances sans nous plaindre  
tu pardones le mal.  
Tu donnes à ta mère  
le monde par son fils  
l'œil de tuteurain  
plus pour que le lys.

Salut à Croix adorables,

Maintiens toi sensible à mes vœux

Par ta vertu, ô Vierge incomparable

Obtiens moi de Jésus, d'aller un jour aux lieux

## LA SOURCE D'EAU VIVE (APOLOGUE)

Sous des arbres touffus coulait limpide et pure  
une source d'eau vive au doux et gai murmure  
placée au bord du chemin.

Une coupe de pierre a l'aspect très rustique  
recueillait sa belle eau.

L'ouvrier qui de son ciseau l'avait creusée assez large et profonde  
avait gravé ces mots adressés aux passants:

"Ressemble à cette source »

Le chemineau dans sa course en étanchant sa soif en cherchait le vrai sens.

Un jour, trois voyageurs rassasiés de son onde  
cherchaient, eux aussi, le sens à découvrir.

Le premier, un marchand, qu'a ses guêtres de cuir  
au gros ballât chargé sur les larges épaules,  
on reconnaissait comme tel  
dit: c'est un conseil formel.

La source toujours coule, elle grossit sans doute  
par les mille ruisseaux qu'elle rencontre en route  
et c'est là son destin.

Elle devient rivière et me semble nous dire:  
"Poursuis sans t'arrêter ton pénible chemin et tu  
prospereras, je puis te le prédire."

L'autre, un vieillard, tenait un gros livre à la main.

Entendant cet avis il secoua la tête;  
Une leçon plus haute en ces mots se reflète;  
Cette source, dit-il, qui s'offre aux altérés  
Sans réclamer de prix ni de reconnaissance  
dit clairement aux mortels assoiffés:

Fais le bien par amour du bien, ta récompense  
Tu devras seulement en toi-même l'avoir.

## LA SOURCE D'EAU VIVE

(APOLOGUE)  
CONTINUATION

Le troisième, rêveur, gardait un grand silence.  
Adolescent aux cheveux blonds  
il n'avait jusqu'alors jamais quitté sa mère  
mais ses deux compagnons voulurent qu'a son tour, il donna sa manière  
de voir.  
Comme la douce violette il hésita, baissa la tête  
puis, tout à coup s'enhardissant il dit tout bas en rougissant:  
Pour moi, l'inscription dit chose plus profonde.  
Que nous importeraient le mouvement de l'onde  
et la fraîcheur du flot qui s'offre à notre ardeur  
si quelque élément corrupteur  
avait troublé son eau pure et féconde.  
Son prix c'est sa limpidité.  
L'activité serait, pour lui ressembler, vaine  
de même que la libéralité.  
Mais dans la vie ayons l'âme pure et chrétienne  
pure comme la fleur au parfum précieux  
Comme les rayons d'or de la voute sereine  
Nous lui ressemblerions et nous serions heureux.

## AU SANCTUAIRE

Doux petit coin de prière  
d'où Je cache mon cœur dans le cœur de mon Dieu  
Où j'entends une voix me dire: "Sur la terre  
le vrai bonheur est en ce lieu."

Que viens-tu faire ici? La voix me dit encore!  
Je viens pour adorer mon maître et mon Seigneur,  
pour apprendre comment il faut que je l'implore  
à fin de devenir meilleur.

Faites ô mon Jésus que bientôt je devienne  
Ce que dans votre amour vous voulez que je sois  
Le cœur aimant et pur, l'âme toujours sereine  
et toujours fidèle a vos lois.

Petite lampe sainte! En ce lieu de prière  
Tu veilles nuit et Jour auprès du Roi des rois,  
avec les anges saints descendus sur la terre  
pour adorer leur Dieu mort pour nous sur la Croix.

Heureuse lampe sainte! Oh douce solitude  
Où tu contemples seule un Dieu, brulant d'amour  
Quand les hommes oublient dans leur ingratitude  
les pieuses douceurs de ce divin séjour.

Visitons, o chrétiens, le pieux sanctuaire  
Où l'on acquiert l'amour de toutes les vertus  
Allons-y souvent dire une bonne prière  
pour nous trouver un Jour du nombre des élus.

Merci, de nous avoir, mon Dieu, par ce miracle  
Donné de votre amour un don si précieux,  
Prosterné devant vous, présent au tabernacle,  
c'est le bonheur des Dieux.

**A' MA FILLE MARGUERITE**  
**Pour le 18<sup>ème</sup> Anniversaire de sa naissance 12 Juillet 1876-1894**

Dix huit ans dans la vie! Oh! le tendre et bel âge!  
C'est le printemps orné de ses plus belles fleurs,  
C'est le lys blanc et pur, et sous son vert feuillage  
La violette aimée, emblème des grands cœurs.  
Tu vas bientôt quitter le saint et pieux asile  
Refuge de vertus, qu'on appelle "Sion"  
Porte nous mon enfant, avec un cœur docile  
De ses enseignements la plus riche moisson.

Au foyer paternel viens t'asseoir chère fille,  
Nous soupirons après ton âme et tout ton cœur,  
Tu trouveras toujours, au sein de ta famille  
L'amour de tes parents, le chemin du bonheur.

**A' MA FILLE MARIE**  
**le jour anniversaire de sa naissance**

Salut ô jour heureux! La bienfaisante aurore  
nous porte ce bonheur. Je me rappelle encore  
de son petit sourire et ses premiers accents.  
Seigneur, en ce beau jour exauce ma prière,  
répands dans ta bonté ta grâce et ta lumière  
dans ce cœur de quinze ans!

Quinze ans! Oh le bel âge, âge plein d'espérance;  
c'est l'âge de la vie ou le printemps commence,  
c'est le bouton de fleur aux parfums embaumés,  
la tendre violette, humble, douce et craintive  
c'est le lys blanc et pur, l'aimable sensitive  
aux charmes tant aimés.

Te le dirai-je enfant! Oui les quinze ans m'effraient.  
Les petits des oiseaux tremblent quand ils essaient  
de s'envoler au loin sur l'aile des Zéphyr.  
Mais tu portes un nom, ton espoir et ton guide,  
Place ma chère enfant sous sa puissante égide  
tes vœux et tes désirs.

Dans cet asile saint, refuge d'innocence  
ou tu puises la foi, le savoir, la science  
de toutes les vertus qui valent un trésor,  
forme toi ce cœur pur qui jamais ne s'étiole  
et n'abandonne point ce lien sans l'auréole  
d'une couronne d'or.

**A' MA FILLE MARIE**  
le jour anniversaire de sa naissance  
(Original Version)

1864  
25 Mars

A Ma fille Marie pour le jour anniversaire de sa naissance.

Salut ô jour heureux ! Ta bienfaisante aurore  
 nous porta ce bonheur. Je me rappelle encore  
 et son <sup>petit</sup> ~~petit~~ sourire et ses <sup>premiers regards</sup> ~~premiers regards~~.

Seigneur, en ce bon jour esquisse ma prière,  
 répands dans ta bonté ta grâce et ta lumière  
 Sur ce cœur de quinze ans.

Quinze ans ! Oh ! le bel âge, âge fleur d'espérance.  
 C'est l'âge de la vie où le printemps commence,  
 C'est le bouton de fleur aux parfums embauvés,  
 La tendre violettes humble danse et évanouit,  
 C'est le lys blanc et pur, l'émoussé sensible  
 aux charmes tant aimés.

Ne le dirai-je enfant ! ces quinze ans m'effraient  
 les petits des oiseaux tremblent quand ils essaient  
 de s'élever au loin sur l'aile des zéphirs.

Mais tu portas en vain, ton espoir et ton guide  
 place ma chère enfant dans sa puissante égide  
 tes vœux et tes prières.

Dans cet asile saint, refuge d'innocence  
 au teu prendes la foi, le savoir et la science  
 de toutes les vertus qui valent tant mieux,  
 forme toi le bon jour qui jamais ne s'étiole,  
 et n'abandonne point le bien sans l'auréole  
 d'un cœur innocent.

## SONNET A MA FILLE LOUISE

Pour la prise d'habit de Sœur de la Charité.

O ma bien chère enfant, de Saint Vincent la fille!

La sainte charité sur ton jeune front brille  
en ce jour où tu dois, en Vierge du Seigneur  
prendre le Saint habit, symbole du bonheur.

Aime toujours enfant, ta nouvelle famille  
Sous le voile sacré, ton tendre cœur pétille  
avide d'accourir, ardent dans sa ferveur,  
au chevet du malade au nom du Sacre Cœur.

Oui confiante va, sur cette route sainte,  
où la foi du Seigneur dissipe toute crainte,  
dorer les tristes jours des pauvres malheureux;  
aux âmes sans espoir faire naître l'espérance,  
dans la joie aime et sois la Sainte obéissance,  
et pense qu'avec toi sont toujours nos doux vœux.

Smyrne, Aout 1907\*

## A MON CHER AMI CHRISTOPHE APACK

Nous allons chaque soir, mon loyal adversaire  
escrimer un savoir un peu stationnaire,  
dans l'immense salon du Cercle Européen,  
ou chacun de nous deux, une queue à la main  
nous avons pu trouver, dans le carambolage  
une distraction qu'un charmant bavardage  
agrémenté souvent sans que, pour le billard  
nous ayons les succès du fameux Charmillard.

Ce Charmillard qui sut se frayer dans l'histoire,  
en charmant les loisirs, si j'ai bonne mémoire,  
de ce brillant monarque et de ce vrai grand roi,  
qui disait, heureux temps!: « Messieurs, l'État c'est moi! »  
Il parvint même un jour à devenir ministre  
sans qu'il fut pour cela précisément un cuistre  
comme ceux de nos jours, et de qui quelquefois  
nous parlons, en citant leurs si tristes exploits.

Ces fâcheux parvenus, que soutient la Carmaille  
du bloc franc-maçon qui ne dit rien qui vaille,  
et qui croit aisément que le monde est fini  
parce qu'il veut salir le cher Montagnini.

Mais revenons au jeu, banal en apparence  
où nous avons trouvé, dans notre expérience,  
que sur ce tapis vert a bandes sur les bords  
où l'on met son talent souvent en vains efforts .  
la bille qui va, vient et revient peu ravie,  
est très parfaitement l'image de la vie.  
A' première vue il est paradoxal  
d'y croire. Mais pourtant ce fait, si peu banal  
nous l'avons maintes fois constaté dans la lutte  
où les billes roulant, sans perdre une minute,  
se choquent, s'éloignent, encore se retrouvant  
avec un résultat parfois très décevant.

N'est-ce pas bien la vie, avec ses jouissances  
ses contrariétés, ses imprévus, ses chances,  
dans ce que l'on appelle en argot de billard  
le contre, le raccroc, un effet, un hasard?

Oui, cher ami, dans ce travail hygiénique  
on peut retirer dans l'ordre philosophique,  
appréciations de grande vérité.  
Sachons toujours jouir de toutes ces beautés;  
continuons le match, avec les mêmes armes  
et finissons parfaire, ayons en le désir,  
les fameux deux cents points de notre ami Missir.

## LE VENT ET LE NUAGE

### Fable

Le nuage bien las de courir par le monde  
 en course tantôt lente et tantôt furibonde  
 sous le souffle du vent, sans trêve ni merci  
 fit au fier aquilon le discours que voici:  
 O souffle impérieux constamment tu me chasses,  
 tu me poursuis sans cesse à travers les espaces,  
 accorde moi de grâce un moment de répit  
 le sommeil généreux d'un seul jour me suffit.

Je recommencerais le lendemain à l'aube  
 à courir devant toi vers tous les points du globe.  
 Devant moi ton destin est de fuir et tu fuis  
 c'est ton sort, il le faut, je regrette et ne puis  
 car dès que vient faillir l'éclatante lumière  
 de l'astre lumineux qui réjouit la terre,  
 tu te mets en travers et souvent ta noirceur  
 cache aux yeux des mortels sa céleste splendeur.  
 Sublime vérité, c'est bien là ton image!  
 L'erreur cherche de voiler ta divine beauté;  
 Mais tu vaincras toujours ô sainte vérité.  
 Le souffle tout puissant de la force éternelle  
 dans un ciel radieux te conserve immortelle.

Mention "Très Bien" au Concours de Poésie du Bulletin de la Jeunesse à Paris.  
 Mars 1914

Souffrez mes chers amis, sans me chercher querelle  
 moi le plus jeune ici, qu'ainsi je vous appelle,  
 quand on se réunit pour jouir d'un bonheur  
 l'âge perd certains droits. L'on ne forme qu'un cœur.  
 Entraînés dans les flancs de la superbe Flore  
 vers ce joli pays où naquit Pythagore  
 vivons au milieu d'une franche gaieté  
 et promettons nous tous joie et félicité,  
 Mangeons bien, buvons bien, et dormons mieux encore,  
 faisons des rêves doux, au-delà de l'aurore.  
 Mettons entre nos mains des reines et des rois  
 gagnons Shlems et Rubbers, et perdons quelquefois,  
 car que l'on soit mazette ou que l'on soit expert  
 c'est la commune loi de chaque tapis vert.  
 O Ciel, protège nous, éloigne les dangers  
 et quand après trois jours d'un si riant voyage  
 nous irons tous revoir notre charmant rivage  
 et nos tendres foyers,  
 nous trouverons contents nos garçons et nos filles.  
 Je bois à la santé de toutes nos familles.

## " Ma loi est douce et mon joug est léger"

(Sonnet)

D'où me vient o mon Dieu cette paix qui m'inonde  
 Ce calme dans la vie et la sainte douceur  
 Qui partout me pénètre. Ah ! la grâce féconde  
 Enivre ma pauvre âme et captive mon cœur.  
 Printemps perpétuel, inconnu dans le monde,  
 Parfums de la vertu, vous créez le bonheur,  
 Suave floraison de cette foi profonde  
 Qui fait germer en nous l'amour pour le Seigneur.  
 Mystérieux liens entre le ciel et l'âme  
 Célestes voix d'amour dont le son nous enflamme  
 Douces sensations qui prodiguent la foi.  
 En nous tout est bonheur, pour nous tout est facile  
 Vous l'avez dit, Seigneur, dans le Saint Évangile,  
 Leger est mon joug et douce est votre loi.

(Ma 11,30)

Enfant! Tu viens de naître au monde des chimères  
 La vie est un passage environné d'écueils;  
 il faut pour le franchir, toucher à des misères  
 et participer à des deuils.

Que voit-on ici has dans ce monde perfide?  
 On outrage l'honneur, on flétrit la vertu et  
 l'incrédulité dans sa course rapide  
 aura bientôt tout abattu.

Le méchant chaque jour augmente son audace;  
 rien ne l'arrête plus, le mal n'a plus de frein  
 et dans son fol orgueil nul ne peut trouver grâce  
 même le grand être divin.

Aussi tout les fléaux ont inondé le monde;  
 le bras du Dieu vengeur a déchainé ses maux.  
 Les hommes, ô destin, fatalité profonde  
 eux-mêmes s'ouvrent leurs tombeaux.

Écoute ô mon enfant les doux conseils d'un père.  
 Pratiquer la vertu c'est là tout le bonheur,  
 la conscience en paix, aime ta bonne mère,  
 ainsi que le divin Seigneur.

## 1870

France ! Qu'as-tu fait de ta gloire,  
La compagne de ton histoire  
Et la mère de tes enfants ?  
L'étranger a voulu l'abattre  
Dans cette lutte opiniâtre  
Contre tant de guerriers vaillants.

Ce n'est point-là qu'on l'a ravie,  
Car comme autrefois a Pavie  
Le Roi vaincu par l'Empereur  
Envoyait son si fier message,  
Tu pus aussi dire avec rage  
"Ah ! tout est perdu hors l'honneur".

Oui ! Dans cette fatale épreuve  
Ton sang a coulé comme un fleuve  
Et ton courage a survécu.  
A l'effort de la lutte sombre  
Qui dut voir plier sous le nombre,  
Ton glorieux drapeau vaincu.

Hélas ! Cette leçon fut dure.  
Elle est saignante ta blessure  
Et l'on entend encore tes pleurs  
(?) l'Alsace et la Lorraine  
Entretiendront toujours la haine  
dans les esprits et dans les cœurs.

Mais ceux qui guident ta fortune  
Oubliant la tache commune  
Que la gloire impose aux Français  
Font la guerre à l'Être suprême  
Et détruisant tout ce qu'on aime  
En méconnaissant ses bienfaits.

Allons ! Debout peuple de France !  
Exerce encore ta vaillance  
Aux urnes qui tendent les bras;  
Et par un vote légitime  
Éloigne du pays l'abîme,  
Que l'on veut creuser sous tes pas.

## LA MEMOIRE

O mémoire bénie ! Objet de ma tendresse  
Dans ce soir de la vie, ô flamme enchanteresse  
Tu fais luire en mon âme avec tes doux rayons  
Le charmant souvenir d'anciens horizons.

O phare lumineux de mes pauvres jours sombres  
Tu redores ma vie en dissipant leurs ombres ;  
Tu fais revivre en moi dans leur douce clarté  
Les heures et les jours de ma félicité.

O printemps de mon cœur qui vit fleurir les roses !  
O luttres de l'esprit dans le destin des choses,  
Je vous vois et je puis, quoique déjà vaincu  
Vivre encore du bonheur d'avoir longtemps vécu.

## JOSEPH FIDAO (1882)



Joseph Fidao  
Smyrna 1882 - 1971

### I

I have already written in previous chapters about my father and I do not need to repeat myself here. I would just like to add a few traits of his personality and some of the salient events that have happened and have not yet been reported. Before doing so, however, I would like to say that in my opinion there is no doubt: Dad has had an intense life full of emotions although apparently it may not seem so.

### II

In 1922 we were in Constantinople and the Allied troops manning the city withdrew on the orders of their respective governments. As a result, the Christian population panicked, fearing a repetition of the tragic events that culminated in the fire and the massacres of Smyrna. An influential Armenian dignitary said in confidence to my father: "Run away with your family, not tomorrow, not today, but now!". So, we left Constantinople by train on our way to Trieste, the first stage in a long series of wanderings in Europe, which after about three years would take us back to Turkey.

From [Trieste](#) we moved to Rapallo and then to [Bordighera](#), where Dad began to suffer seriously from the kidneys. I remember he had kidney colic that made him moan in pain. Our situation was precarious because, after the hasty escape from Constantinople, Dad

was out of work and also ill. Meeting by chance a Greek gentleman in Bordighera, who had kidney surgery in Switzerland, determined Dad's decision to have himself operated on for kidney stones. But how to deal with the expense of two surgeries? It was Uncle Harry, at the intervention of aunt Marie, his wife and dad's sister, who took care of the problem.

After our stay in Basel for Dad's operations we moved to Paris where he could go back to work. He constantly blessed Heaven for regained health. We settled in Saint Germain-en-Laye where Maria and I went to school.

Meanwhile, in Smyrna Uncle Harry (and others) expressed the judgment that with dad's hasty departure from Constantinople he had left the firm to its fate without first caring to save the company's own property.

However, after the storm, uncle Harry gave up, admitting that no one in the circumstances in which we were (especially after the tragic events in Smyrna) would have acted differently. Dad was offered to go back to his uncle's company, but this time to Smyrna. Dad agreed and we left again for Turkey. As mentioned later (page 19), we landed in Smyrna on February 16, 1925, and Dad never moved from there again.

### III

I think I can say that my father's most prominent characteristic, the one that predominated over all the others, was his great honesty that I have no hesitation in comparing to legendary Abraham Lincoln's for which he was called "Honest Abe ". This manifested itself on several occasions, especially when uncle Harry Giraud (1871) who was a man of considerable substance, gave him the task of administering his assets, something that obviously required a considerable degree of trust, which uncle himself had the opportunity to express once in public exclaiming: "I have more confidence in Joseph than in myself!".

I was able to see this quality myself when Uncle Harry once said to me: "Tell your dad to give you fifty lire" (Turkish) a sum not negligible for a boy at the time. I immediately reported it to my father but, after some time without the fifty lire appearing, I asked Dad why, and he replied that he had not yet had the opportunity to ask uncle for confirmation, since he was momentarily absent. In other words, my father wanted confirmation of what I had told him because he thought that, in my youthful exuberance, I might have misunderstood or exaggerated the amount.

Speaking of dad's assignment, the question arises: why didn't uncle Harry pay Dad more worthily for his delicate work and his services? Perhaps uncle thought he had already done enough for Dad during his two surgeries in Switzerland. But there is also another, more subtle hypothesis: the one that with the assignment that dad had, he could have taken advantage of it to create, discreetly, a certain heritage, as it was suspected that Dad's predecessor had done, practically without harming the interests of his uncle, immensely rich. There was no hint of all this: my father was too honest to undertake this kind of maneuvers; our family income always remained modest, and so did our train of life. When Dad died, there was never any inheritance for his children.

### IV

My father's second characteristic was his kindheartedness. Never, not once did he raise his hand, or threaten to do so, neither on me nor on my sisters, while my mother, obviously more in contact with us and having to endure our childish pranks, disobedience, etc., did not behave the same.

### V

My father's sporting passion was hunting, which in a way contrasted with his goodness. Killing animals is understandable when you do it to feed, to live. Jesus' first disciples were fishermen. But doing so for pleasure, for pastime, certainly poses problems of

conscience. In Smyrna, where many went hunting, game at that time was abundant, no one was troubled by such problems.

My father was considered one of the best hunters.

I remember father's dog Dick's joy when he appeared in his hunter outfit, and said, "Let's go!". Dad was visibly satisfied when he came home with a lot of game: once with twenty-one pecks, an absolute record that earned him a lot of praise.

However, his goodness and sensitivity evidently ended up winning.

Once a partridge took off leaving behind a brood of young. He set fire and the bird fell to his feet. The little ones, believing that their mother had returned, rushed to find her lifeless. The episode deeply upset my father and from that time his outings became less and less frequent. Until one day he sold rifle, cartridges, ammunitions and clothing, and never went hunting again.

## VI

My father had a great friend named Auguste. I always suspected that Auguste, who was single, was secretly in love with my mother.

Auguste did not have a passion for hunting. Nonetheless, he allowed himself to be carried away, a bit ill-willed I believe, by dad's hunting passion and occasionally accompanied him to the surrounding hills "maquis".

Once they had gone out together and a flock of partridges suddenly rose in front of dad with the characteristic and sudden thunderous wings clapping. Dad takes aim and shoots.

After a few moments he hears laments and cries coming from about fifty meters in front of him.

He had struck his friend Auguste in the face. Auguste had lost his sense of direction and happened be in front of my father instead of staying on his right, the position in which they had started their outing.

Fortunately, the accident had no serious consequences; the pellets, fifty-nine, were all stuck superficially on his skin. Since wild boars often wondered in the area, Dad was getting ready to replace the cartridges of pellets n.10 (small) that he had in the barrel, with large swoops, when the partridges rose in flight, thus avoiding much more dramatic consequences.

For Auguste it was the last game of hunting. And maybe the incident played its part in father's giving up his favorite sport.

## VII

At the beginning of World War II, In Smyrna, I was a convinced Fascist.

Far from Italy, from the life imposed on Italians by the regime, and surrounded as I was by subjects of the adverse camp who showed me their enmity with little reserve, it is quite natural that my youthful enthusiasm should firmly take sides in favor of the Axis powers, also because of my mother's nationality.

My father, on the other hand, was much less enthusiastic than I was, and to all my sally, often extremist, he opposed reasoning based on common sense, prudence and a sense of balance, which irritated me very much so that I sometimes had expressions that were not very respectful towards him.

When I left Smyrna and joined the army, our discussions often came to mind, with a deep sense of regret, having seen how things really were.

So, one night, in Leopoli, off duty from the guard service, (during which there was a danger of being targeted by snipers stationed on the roofs of the buildings across the

street), instead of going to sleep I wrote a letter to my parents in which I asked dad to forgive me for my disrespectful words, and I told both my parents that what they had given me with their high example and education in the family was worth a lot, much more than money.

## VIII

My mother was extremely nervous, sensitive and emotional; which certainly weighed on my father who apparently was always calm and placid, but was very sensitive too.

However, like many of his generation, he did not betray his feelings: it would be considered almost a disgrace. This attitude of controlling one's nerves is in stark contrast with what is happening nowadays, particularly in sporting events.

I remember on a number of occasions when my mother had a nervous breakdown with weeping and sobbing, he would take her in his arms holding her tight for a few minutes until she recovered.

The worst crisis my mother had, with obvious repercussions for Dad, was when my sister Peachy - at the age of about two - fell through the window of our house in Smyrna, located on the second floor.

Mom was away from home and had left Peachy in Dad's care. However, at one point, perhaps evading Dad's a little too permissive surveillance, Peachy stepped over the windowsill and fell down.

Luckily, the fall was cushioned by phone wires passing underneath, so Peachy got away with not too much trauma. But I remember Mom's reaction when she came home, and my father's difficulty in calming her down.

It was months before Mom recovered from the shock.

And the memory takes me back, to the times in Bordighera, when I was ten or eleven years old and I attended the French College of Saint Charles.

Dad (as mentioned above) suffered a lot from his kidneys: he had a stone in one kidney and two in the other. When it was decided that he should have surgery in Basel, Mom had a nervous breakdown.

The situation was already difficult with the head of the family without a job because he was sick, and it did not need his wife with a nervous breakdown!! However, Dad left for Basel anyway and despite a dangerous relapse following a severe post-surgery hemorrhage, he recovered.

It was on that occasion that Mom made the vow to convert to Catholicism if Dad was cured, which she did shortly afterwards during our stay in Mulhouse.

## IX

I have already spoken about my father's religious feelings, but there is an additional detail that deserves to be mentioned. Although he never expressed his views on religion, the fact that he was not a churchgoer shows that his attitude towards religion was, at best, lukewarm.

Nevertheless, when the Freemasons of Smyrna, the vast majority of whom were foreigners and all without exception very wealthy, offered to welcome him into their sect, he refused. Freemasonry, at that time, was considered anti-Catholic and was certainly anti-religious. On the other hand, it was well known that those who joined it had the future assured. Why did Dad refuse, when he knew he was going to fix his financial situation - and that of his family? I don't know, I never talked to him about it, but my impression then was that he had done it because of the enmity of Freemasonry towards the Catholic Church, to which he felt he belonged despite everything.

**X**

At the age of eighty-nine, Dad had a sudden drop in his physical condition. He felt extremely weak so much so that my sister Maria and her husband Riri had to help him undress in the evening because he was unable to do it himself. Then came the collapse, the catalepsy. The doctor decreed his death. However, after a few hours Dad regained his senses, returned to breathe and move normally, sat on the bed and asked where everybody was.

This state lasted a few weeks, and quite a few hailed this as a miracle, until one morning my sister went to see how Dad had spent the night and found him motionless in his bed, with his head turned to the right, as she had seen it so many times: she was convinced that he was still sleeping. But he was dead.

Death had come on tip toes in his sleep. It was October 8, 1971. Now he rests quietly in the eternal peace of the righteous in the Catholic cemetery of Bornova (Smyrna).

## GIUSEPPE (JOE) FIDAO

(Istanbul 15/12/1912- Genova 2002)

### Auto-biographical notes



I was born an Austrian citizen, in Constantinople (now Istanbul) at the Germanic Hospital in Sira Selvi Street. Because of the events reported at p.5 of the notes of Richard Fidao (1915), at the age of six I became an Italian citizen.

I don't know if the birth of a male descendant was greeted by my parents with satisfaction; my father seems to have cultivated a particular affection for my sister Maria (1911), which she reciprocated both at her tender age and in the years when Dad, being in his old age, became a real burden on her shoulders; however, she treated him with great affection, devotion and patience until his last breath. God bless you, Mariechen darling!

My mother, on the other hand, pampered and cuddled me excessively and now I realize that this had a remarkable impact on my character. I remember myself snuggled up in her lap with caresses and kisses: we called it "making pussitch." I became punctually whining and in trouble if I was separated from my mother, whose skirts I desperately clung to.

The first school I attended was the English High School for Girls in Constantinople, where some children were admitted; I should have considered myself lucky to be surrounded by so many rosy-cheeked girls; instead, I hated them fiercely because in those days I was a chubby kid and the girls kissed me until they choked me and pinched my thighs. When the bell rang at the end of class I would rush down the stairs as quickly as I could to avoid kisses and pinching. The paradoxes of life!

Until the age of about ten I lived in a world entirely my own, in which sensations completely dominated ideas. I remember the immense joy I felt when I was four years old, watching the blue sky, immaculate, through the branches of a cherry blossom in our garden in Moda (Asian suburb of Constantinople), or observing, mesmerized, the arabesques that the sun drew on the sandy bottom of the sea at Kalamisch as I sat looking down over the edge of our boat; or the deep sadness I felt when I listened to my mother playing on the piano a certain piece we called "Das Lieblingslied" (the music of the heart).

## DAGMAR JEDERMANN

My mother was German; born in Costantinopoli to a German father and Danish mother. Until I went to school, we all spoke German at home and we lived in a German environment: brush-cut-haired boys, girls with braids, stiff men often bald-headed, women in long high waist skirts. German officers with pointed elms, shiny boots and golden swords. All in an atmosphere of Pan Germanism as if extracted from Grimm's fairy tales. My mother's brothers were a typical example of beautiful men of the Teutonic race.

Even the German folklore was expressed with so many fairy tales that Mom read to us and that enchanted us, while the Christmas atmosphere of Nordic tradition impressed me deeply. To this day when I smell the resinous scent of the Christmas tree, as I pronounce the word, Christbaum, (Christmas tree) I go back to those magic moments of wonderful expectation of my childhood, when two children, Mariechen and I waited, hand in hand, for the door to open so that we could enter the room where the tree was placed, while singing Christmas carols and, when the door opened, we contemplated the tree lit with candles, while mountains of toys lay beneath.

My mother, Dagmar Jedermann (1890), was Protestant and it was only in 1924, when she was in Basel for dad's surgery and he had a dangerous hemorrhage, that she made the vow to become Catholic if Dad was cured.

He recovered and not long after, in [Mulhouse](#) (Alsace) while Dad was in Paris for work, Mom got baptized embracing the Catholic faith.

The fact that my dad had married a Protestant girl must have been a shock for grandfather, and that probably explains why he never expressed the desire to meet her.

On the other hand, neither Mary nor I have ever met him. By the time Mom was baptized grandfather was already dead.



*Dagmar Jedermann*

## LIFE IN CONSTANTINOPLE

While in Constantinople, a German girl my age, Thea Saury, often came to play at our house when we were about nine years old.

Thea was blonde, heavenly eyes, and willing to play "husband and wife" in secluded corners. Our parents, all caught up in their conversations, occasionally commented: 'How quiet the children are today!' When these games weren't possible, I used to show off as a strong man by passing a needle in and out of the skin of my palm, which filled Thea with admiration and dismay.

Joan Lagstonday, daughter of an Anglican pastor, also came home to play.

Our favorite game was to save her at sea, after which I practiced artificial respiration and I remember the first symptoms of masculinity I had on those occasions.

In 1919, the Russian Communists defeated the "Whites" loyal to the Tsar and led by the legendary general Vrangal. As a consequence, thousands of White Russians poured into Turkey crossing the border. Many were of noble families and settled in Constantinople. They got busy and opened restaurants, nightclubs and similar businesses while many became taxi drivers. Several young women of the Russian nobility offered themselves as nannies in the homes of foreigners.

One of these young nobles was hired by my parents to look after my sister and me.

Her name was Lilly Kutiepoff (Miss Lilly for us). She was blonde, blue eyes, twenty years old, the sweetest creature on earth. I was enchanted by her and probably fell in love with her because when I realized that her caresses and kisses were inspired by maternal feelings, I was deeply disappointed.

After a while I thought the time had come to "declare myself". I wrote a letter to Lilly and put it under her pillow while she was out of the house on leave. When the doorbell rang in the evening I rushed to the front door to open, and as soon as I did, Lilly fell to the ground unconscious. She was transported to her bed by my parents. She was delirious with high fever and spoke inconsistently.

As I peered behind the door, I heard her say: "No, my love, you are not too old for me, I love you! I heard my parents say that no doubt, she referred to an English officer who accompanied her during her outings. This gave a mortal blow to my hopes. I don't remember what happened to my letter placed under her pillow.

Lilly taught us many solitaire and card games and kept us in suspense with her gruesome tales of ghosts, always set in Russia, in lonely castles buried under the snow.

Until the age of about thirteen I was afraid to venture into dark and lonely places: I imagined that a large spider behind me would grab me with its tentacles; Lilly's tales were surely at the basis of such a morbid complex.

In 1921 the family embarked on a wonderful train journey to [Marienbad](#) in Bohemia. (Czechoslovakia).

It was my first contact with the sleeping cars and restaurant cars of the Simplon Orient Express, which at that time was considered the most luxurious, charming and mysterious train in the world, on which beautiful spy women and military personnel were travelling on secret missions. The stop in Vienna, on the way north, was just as beautiful as staying at the holiday resort.

On our return we traveled on a cruise ship along the Danube from Vienna to [Belgrado](#) and it was an enchantment even for children our age.



Joe and Maria in Marienbad

When we arrived in Constantinople, the Greek population of the city was in turmoil because of the war of independence that the Turks fought in Asia Minor to drive the Greeks out of Anatolia. Things went wrong for the Greeks and I remember their cries in the streets "Erhete - Erhete" (Comes - Arrives). Who was to come was not clear to everyone, but it was later known that the cries were addressed to the Greek statesman Venizelos who, it was hoped, would change the course of events in favor of the Greeks.

But the Turks continued to advance in Asia Minor, and on 9 September 1922 they occupied Smyrna, the last cornerstone in Greek hands.

Before leaving the city, the Greeks set it on fire (according to some the Turks were responsible for it) while entering the city the Turks plundered it and committed vandalism and robbery especially against Christians.

Our frequent commutes after leaving Constantinople were not healthy for mine and my sister's studies, so our parents decided it was time to attend a school.

In [Bordighera](#), Maria was sent to the Dames de Sion School and I was sent to the Saint Charles College. I think I can say that my time at that school was one of the most unhappy of my life, mainly because of a "Frère" who terrified me with his huge stature and his serious voice.

On Sundays, when the weather was good, my favorite pastime was to sit on a bench not far from the edge of a high cliff, from which I observed huge waves following each other, crashing with rumbling noise on the underlying rocks, with high iridescent splashes.

Bordighera, [Basel](#) (for Dad's two kidney surgeries), Mulhouse and finally Paris, where we settled in St. Germain-en-Laye, in a house owned by a Monsieur Richard who smelled wine and used little soap. There was also the flood of the Seine with many surrounding villages flooded with water and an obligation to boil drinking water.

## SMYRNA

After about a year of residence, Dad was offered a job in Smyrna at O.C.M. (Oriental Carpet Manufacturers) which meant Uncle Harry Giraud, husband of Tante Marie (1872) Dad's sister.

So, we left by train, for the umpteenth time, from Paris to Rome then to Napoli where we embarked on the ship "Constantinople" of the Servizi Marittimi. Two details marked the sea voyage: the first was a violent storm overtaking Cape Matapan, from which the ship as well as the passengers came out rather battered. The second was the pleasant figure of the ship's commander: an out-of-the-ordinary man, a typical example of the "sea dog"; he was from Chiavari, a city we came to know many years later.

We landed in Smyrna on February 16, 1925. A new chapter opened in my life,

And it was an important chapter.

First: it was important because I was sent, for my studies, to the American International College in Smyrna where I graduated (Bachelor of Arts) and where I fully absorbed the American way of life and attachment to America itself.

My teachers and professors were typical examples of clean and honest American citizens: they instilled in me the love for America that I still feel.

At the American College, I acquired the basic knowledge I have today. As for the atmosphere that the whole situation created, it may be better described with the following song that we sang and that still touches me:

Here's to our College  
Here's to our School  
We've had good times here  
Which we won't forget for many a day  
So, give another cheer, boys,  
Giver her a cheer  
Old International we're glad we're here!

Second: because of the magnificent summer holidays I spent on the island of Rhodes, which was Italian at the time; it was my first contact with the new motherland.

Rhodes was nicknamed "the pearl of the Mediterranean" and fully deserved it. The long and continuous dives with Wem Whittall in the waters then crystal clear, without the slightest trace of pollution; the afternoon boat trips with the boatman Gennaro Scagliarino; the sharks at the Kumburnu point at sunset; the old and imposing city walls renovated with art and measure, able to appear old and new at the time. The multitude of dolphins accompanying the ship to Smyrna Bay. The flashing of headlights along the coast as the ship proceeded late into the night.

Third: I began to work with C. J. Giraud & Co, my first experience in the business world. The "high season" working until two and three in the morning; the acrid smell of sulfur emanating from the ovens for the raisins lightening procedure; the feverish work to send the boarding documents in due time, which required great concentration and elimination of the any other thought.

Contracts, invoices, certificates of origin, insurance, telegrams arriving and departing, correspondence in various languages, telephone calls in Turkish (which I had come to speak fluently) It was a feverish activity to the highest degree, but it only lasted three months of the year. The rest of the time was quite stagnant and I often left the office at noon to go and play golf.

Fourth: I got engaged to an English girl, after a series of events and experiences.

Her name was Joan La Fontaine. She was English, despite the French surname; the family was Protestant. They were descendent of the French Huguenots who, in the seventeenth century, had been persecuted by King Charles IX of France and massacred on the night of St. Bartholomew. Many of these Huguenots fled to England and took English nationality, after which a number of them moved to settle down in Turkey as did Joan's ancestors.

Joan's parents and relatives were anti-Catholic and anti-Italian. They disapproved of our relationship and went out of their way to end it.

Joan was sent to England and several times to Constantinople in the hope that she would forget me and that she might meet a young man more suited to marrying a good English girl. One idea of Joan's parents' attitude towards me is given by the exclamation that one day escaped Joan's mother, who said:

"The idea of having Catholic grandchildren is perfectly odious!".

Her father had once said to me: "My dear Joe, you will never be able to speak English like an Englishman".

Once, when Joan returned to Smyrna after a few weeks' absence, her parents gave a lavish reception in their beautiful home, to which the elite of wealthy English youth was invited, but I was not.

When, another time, I won a golf tournament, I was handed a smaller cup than the others, with no explanation for this discriminatory gesture by the club secretary, of which Joan's father was a member.

This, and other similar circumstances, always encouraged me to perfect my knowledge of English, to improve my tennis, my golf, to become a good swimmer, all in order to have the satisfaction of beating the English in their own sports.

Later I also proved satisfaction in taking the girls away from the English boys.

Joan had been absent for a few weeks in Constantinople at her grandparents, and her letters became less and less frequent. I decided to go to Constantinople to see what was going on. When I got there, I found Joan vague and absent. She introduced me to several English friends who took her water skiing.

I returned to Smyrna very depressed with the clear feeling that her parents and relatives were succeeding in taking her away from me. Months passed and her letters ended altogether.

Later I found out that Joan had married one of the guys I met on the beach. Shortly thereafter she also had a baby. Then, suddenly the staggering news: Joan had died falling from the sixth floor into the void of the stairs. I never knew if it was accidental or if she committed suicide instead.

Finally, because of World War II that broke out while I was in Smyrna.

That's when something surprising happened to me: overnight all my English friends turned their back on me, they no longer spoke to me. For them we were enemies even though we had known each other for years, even though we were in a neutral country.

However, one girl, Olive, was an exception. On the train from [Bornova](#) to Smyrna she came to sit next to me talking and chatting friendly, regardless of the warnings received by the British military. For her, the fact that Italy and Britain were at war meant nothing, she said; we were friends we would stay friends.

My friendship with Olive had grown and developed over the years without mutual physical attraction, even though she was a lovely girl, and it seems to me that this disproves the theory that friendship between man and woman cannot exist as it exists between two of the same sex.

A few years later, Olive's parents decided to send her to England for a time. Some of our mutual friends told her that she was lucky to be able to be alone, away from any supervision and to be able to live her own life experiences.

She had shared with me her doubts about how she should behave during her absence, partly because of some advice contrary to morals, which a friend had given her. I told her that in case she was in trouble and felt the need for advice, she should think of her parents and ask them as if they were present. "The answer will come, I said, though they will be far from you."

When Olive came back from England, she hugged me tight exclaiming "You're a real friend, Joe, your good advice has been useful to me more than once."

At the beginning of the war, Turkey was neutral, but full of both German and allied military personnel in civilian clothes, many of them with their families.

I became good friend one summer, with the wife of a British officer and we would speak constantly in English.

As we walked along the beach one evening she told me something derisory towards the Italians. I immediately told her that I was Italian, but she would not believe me: she was convinced that I was English.

So, I had the demonstration of having mastered the English language perfectly, and the ironic comments of Joan's father came to mind with considerable satisfaction.

## **THE DECISION TO LEAVE SMYRNA**

Life in Smyrna was getting tedious, unbearable. Toward the end, I kept a diary where I expressed the growing disgust I felt for Turkey and for the environment in which I lived, which I felt had nothing in common with me. In addition, surrounded as we were by the xenophobic Turks, Europe's environment was increasingly reduced, boring and petty.

I felt that I would inevitably be associated with all this if I continued to live there. I decided to leave. But where to?

Italy, of course. This would have meant joining the army, being in the middle of a war, which, moreover, I was quite prepared to do.

But how would I reach Italy? Due to the events of the war there was no service to Italy not by sea nor by air.

I had to choose between a sailing ship that would take me from the Turkish coast to [Rhodes](#), from where I would have continued the trip to Italy on an Italian military aircraft running the risk of being shot down by an allied aircraft.

Or, more attractively, cross Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria by train. In the latter case, however, I would have had to take care of the expenses for the trip. I chose the second alternative.

When I look back recalling those fatidic days full of disgust for the life in Turkey, I feel obliged to dwell on an episode of the 'Turkey chapter' which is an exception and deserves a particular reference as it will always remain in my memory as one of the most exciting moments of my life.

It is about the beauty of the Lidja beach resort and the intense happiness that it has always brought to me. The crystal-clear sea, with its very clean waters, free from any kind of pollution; the gentle, abundant and light sand that caressed my limbs; the bright blue sky; the voluptuous feeling of walking on the bottom of the sandy sea; the refreshing sea breeze that tempered the fiery heat of the summer sun; the salt flavor on my tanned body; sitting at the table after a full morning, with abundant grilled seafood, all this created a harmonious set of happiness and body well-being.

All this was not marred by crowds of people and by harassing, cacophonous noises, characteristic of modern times and places to which, I am told, Lidja itself has since had to succumb,

Several times I would go at night to the end of a wooden jetty and stand still, as mesmerized by the peaceful succession of phosphorescent waves, the explosion of myriad of stars and occasional meteorites whizzing through the firmament.

I was deeply inhaling the sea breeze and felt a mixture of happiness and sadness. Happiness, because of the shining beauty I was surrounded with, sadness because, immersed as I was in harmonic nature, it seemed that I was a stone's throw away from the TRUTH that I longed to know, but that jealously and inexorably guarded its mystery.

It was on one of those nights that I first asked myself the question on the purpose of every human thought and action, which later took the form of my theory of sensations. My reasoning was: there must be in each one a denominator that applies to all humanity, the driving force of every thought and every action – what is it? I remember tracing on the sand with a stick the letter "I", It was just the beginning.

Today, recalling the days spent in Lidja, I recite with deep nostalgia the poem of my grandfather entitled "La Mémoire" which expresses so well what I feel and that begins with the words: "Oh mémoire bénie! Objet de ma tendresse.. " Read it all, whether you are young or old. It expresses in beautiful and profound words all that I myself feel at this moment, for having experienced so deeply so many moments that come to mind, full of emotion, happy or sad.

## **THE DEPARTURE**

The departure took place on Wednesday, March 18, 1942. The last note in my diary the night before ended with these words "Desidero aumentare le mie conoscenze e raffinare la mia anima" in English: "I want to increase my knowledge and refine my soul".

I left full of joyful expectation for this adventure, but I remember — and I will never forget — my mother's face in tears behind the window as I walked away.

It was the last time I saw her: she died while I was away. I fear that young people, full as they are of enthusiasm, rarely realize the deep suffering that they can create in their parents. They only understand this when they are parents themselves, but when they do, it is generally too late. Today I am convinced that if I had been in my parents' place, my departure, especially in the circumstances of the time, would have caused me immense pain.

There was the usual moment of turmoil when we crossed the border between Turkey and Bulgaria on foot.

Rifle shots were fired in our direction by the Turks against a smuggler who had joined our group in the hope of entering Bulgaria more easily. Fortunately, we managed without a scratch, but the smuggler was captured by the Turks, a little inside Bulgarian territory, and dragged back to Turkey.

Then I was taken by an intense emotion: not far across the border, in the border town of Zwillingrad, I observed the spire of a church. It was Europe, it was Christianity, no longer the oppressive Turkish and Muslim environment that I could no longer stand. But above all it was finally something that belonged to me, to my deep and intimate being. A few more steps and my longing would come true!

From Sofia to Bucharest, but before we could leave Sofia, we had to wait a few days as the Danube was still largely frozen.

When we were told that we could proceed, we boarded a ferry that took us to the other side in Romania. The ferry must have been of solid construction as large blocks of ice moving downstream continuously hit the hull. The beauty of the rolling landscape on both sides of the river was lovely. At that time the region was called "the garner of Europe" because of the endless grainfields.

The border town between Bulgaria and Romania was flooded by the river and we had to proceed through Romanian customs walking on top of a row of chairs, arranged for this purpose.

Bucharest was not very exciting, but Budapest definitely was.

A cousin of mine who lived there insisted that I spend a few days with him.

We toured the night-clubs and played a lot of tennis at the beautiful club on Margaret Island.

However, I made an encounter at the Hotel Hungaria, which clouded my stay, most pleasant otherwise.

In the elevator of the hotel I met a man who became overly interested in my person. He phoned me all the time, inviting me to join him in his room.

I asked the hall porter about this man: I was told that he was a very wealthy and influential person who was of Argentine nationality; his name was "X". The concierge added that he would seek further information.

A few days later he took me aside and told me that the character in question helped the Jews reach Palestine on ships he procured, against payment in kind such as gold and jewelry. I was happy to leave Budapest because that man's intrusiveness was getting creepy.

When I got off the train in Vienna on my way to Italy, my attention was drawn to a newspaper with key headlines, displayed on a newsstand. As I approached, I read, "Ship with hundreds of Jews blows up."

Continuing on, I read that the ship had reached the port of Smyrna in Turkey but was banned from having access to the port because there was a cholera epidemic on board. The passengers were without food and water, their laments could be heard from the shore. The ship was towed offshore, far away into the bay, and after about ten days it blew up and sank.

The newspaper added that the Jews on board had been promised to reach Palestine, against payment of large sums of money, by a dubious Argentine character whose headquarters were in a large Budapest hotel...

## THE MILITARY PERIOD

From Vienna to Trieste, where I reported to the Military District. The orderly room soldiers, surprised, exclaimed "We cannot believe that you chose to come here when you could be safe in Turkey!" But I remembered the spire of Zwillingrad Church and felt deep satisfaction for the choice I had made.

From the Military District of Trieste, I was assigned to a Regiment in [Livorno](#), but during the medical examination at the military hospital of that city I managed, as a volunteer, to obtain three months of license, which I spent in Rome.

This Roman holiday was a real treat. Rome, in those days (1942) was not the chaotic city of today.

We were in mid-April and the temperature and weather were perfect. I spent every morning discovering the beauties of the city and fell in love with it.

I was particularly impressed by the Vatican Museums with its long galleries, by art museums and art galleries whose fads with ivory marquees spread an extraordinary light that, I thought, Leonardo da Vinci would have so much appreciated to paint.

My thirst for culture, the European culture, which had been stifled for so many years, was finally being satisfied, while at the same time obtaining a sense of accomplishment.

During that stay in Rome, I met a colonel of the Ministry of War (now renamed "Ministry of Defense) who promised to find me an accommodation at the Ministry considering my knowledge of languages. In fact, about a month after my return to the regiment in Livorno, I received orders to report at the headquarters of ARMIR, Transport Division, in Leopoli.

I had no idea where Leopoli was, so during the free exit I went to a bookstore and asked for an atlas.

After consulting the index and turned on the page indicated I saw, with great wonder, that it was Lemberg (Leopoli in Italian) located in Poland!

"This is not possible" I thought, there must be a mistake, the Colonel told me about the Ministry in Rome!

I phoned the Colonel who said to me: "Yes, you have to go to Leopoli, but rest assured, you will work comfortably in an office of the Italian Command. And if you behave, it may be that you're promoted to lieutenant."

The colonel was right.

[Leopoli](#) (Lwow in Polish and Lemberg in German), was a delightful Polish town of about 200,000 inhabitants, and at that time was still unharmed by the events of the war.

The Poles were particularly friendly to us Italians even if officially we were enemies, so much so that every Italian worth of respect had his Polish girlfriend.

My girlfriend's name was Maria Tschichinska.

I worked in a comfortable office, heated in the winter by a tiled stove that reached the ceiling, and instead of living in the barracks with the rest of the Italian contingent, I had two rooms in a nice apartment that I had seized, where I met with Maria when I was on leave.

The owners of the apartment told me that they were very happy to have their home requisitioned by the Italians instead of by the Germans, whom they hated, and ... "if you could bring us food instead of paying the (nominal) rent we'd rather,"

Since then my food provisions went regularly to the hosts who were thrilled.

Maria Tschichinska was a dear girl; she was distinguished in her bearing and had beautiful legs. She had excellent table manners, which is not common among continental Europeans.

She was serious and trustworthy. At the age of twenty-three, she was still a virgin. She was particularly gifted in learning languages, and after a few weeks she spoke Italian almost fluently.

Maria was in constant apprehension for fear that someone would see us together and took all kinds of precautions to prevent this from happening.

I asked her several times why, since the other Italians circulated freely in the company of Polish girls.

After much prevaricating and delaying, Maria confessed that she belonged to the Polish Resistance, by whom Italians were considered enemies. "If the resistance discovers our relation, it will certainly take very severe sanctions against me."

Several times after that, I suggested that we should stop seeing each other, but she would not hear about it. Then, one evening Maria did not show up at our appointment.

Nor did she the next evening. I sent a message to her house, but I didn't get a response. I went there personally in the evening hoping I could talk to someone from the family.

I was received by an old aunt who told me that Maria had disappeared and that her parents were looking for her.

I was wondering if her parents knew about her ties to resistance, but I didn't say anything to her aunt. Had the resistance become aware of our relation?

Every night I went to the apartment hoping to find Maria waiting for me, smiling, but I never saw her again.

As an interpreter, I was soon in trouble at the Command of Leopoli.

My knowledge of the Italian language was poor due to the lack of practice. When a German officer showed up one day, I was immediately called by the commanding colonel to translate what he said.

The German officer was the bearer of a complaint: in a small town in Poland, a group of Italian soldiers had set fire to the wooden station building, and he demanded, with disdain, that the perpetrators be punished as well as for a compensation for the damage.

While I fully understood what the German officer had said, I did not refer the matter correctly to the Colonel, and he dismissed the German officer and reserved the right to have an investigation carried out.

When it was performed, it was learned that an Italian troop train bound for the Russian front was abandoned by the Germans on a dead track with two meters of snow on the sides, precisely in the village of the accident, and comfortably forgotten by the Germans.

The troop, however, feeling the grip of frost, asked the lieutenant: "We are cold, can we light a fire to warm up?" The lieutenant answered "Make do."

The men got off the train and found no other wood than the railing surrounding the station. They demolished it and lit a bursting fire, which inadvertently spread to the station itself which was destroyed by flames.

When my colonel heard about it, he had a fit of anger; with me, because I had not interpreted the words of the German officer correctly, and with the troop for their carelessness.

He yelled that he would send me and those responsible to the battlefield.

He almost did.

I was transferred to [Kamenskaya](#), a Russian town a few kilometers behind the front line. It was terribly cold in that place, 36°(centigrade) below zero; a cold, howling wind pinched our ears and the tip of our fingers.

One morning, as I walked through the snow to go to the office, gunshots and machine guns suddenly went off from a forest not far from our building: a command of Russian partisans was attacking our detachment by surprise. A minute later, me and half a dozen other Italian soldiers lied in the snow.

I had been reached by a bullet to my right cheek and also the abdomen was heavily bleeding.

When the stretchers arrived, I was almost unconscious, but I remember clearly observing the beautiful contrast of my blood on the white snow.

I woke up at the Italian military hospital in Leopoli. A Polish surgeon, approaching my bed, told me, in Italian, that I had lost a lot of blood but that my injuries were not serious and that I would be back in shape in a few weeks. Which was disappointing since I hoped I would never have to go back to Kamenskaya again. Later the surgeon, whose reputation in the hospital was very high, came regularly to visit me, which surprised me since I was recovering reasonably well.

After about three weeks I felt good enough and was discharged from the hospital. I had to show up at the Command in Leopoli to find out where I was going to be assigned and I was very relieved to hear that the previous Colonel Commander, who had sent me to Kamenskaya, was no longer there, having been transferred himself.

It was therefore not difficult for my friends in the Command to resume me to my previous duties.

A quiet and carefree period followed, although the news coming from the front were disastrous.

I got to know Erni, a "blitzmädel" (German girls who worked mainly on telex).

Erni soon became the cause of many scuffles and insults between us Italians and the German military in the kafés we frequented or in the street.

The Germans, in addition to having little regard for their Italian allies, were jealous that a German girl would walk around with an Italian rather than with them.

The most violent episode took place one evening in the street.

A German soldier addressing Ernie, called her "offiziersmaterasse" (mattress for officers). I answered with a couple of punches, but he was supported by two comrades who laid me on the ground while Ernie bent over me to dry a blood rush that had appeared on my lip.

At this point, Italian and German reinforcements reached us for support. One of the Germans, contrary to the rules, was armed, and planted his gun in the belly of one of the Italians. It was a matter of seconds the blow could start any moment, when fortunately a patrol of the German military police equipped with a providential whistle confiscated the German's gun and dragged him away.

My previous apartment had been occupied by another Italian officer, and since I wanted to have a place where I could relax in the evening, I was forced to requisition a new one.

When I showed up at a house in Haukebosaka Street, which I had chosen, I was extremely surprised when the door was opened by the same surgeon who had operated me at the military hospital.

He seemed to me so aged and slimmed down in such a short time that I had some doubt that it was actually him. But he recognized me right away and invited me in. A minute later we were sitting in his living room talking. He asked me about my injuries, then he addressed an issue that left me stunned.

He told me that he was Jewish, which I would never have known given his Aryan physiognomy, and that he and his family had so far been spared since he was a good

surgeon and had saved the lives of many wounded German soldiers. However, the Berlin authorities had recently cancelled his authorization to practice. "Now there is no hope for me and my family," he said, "unless you can help us." I replied that it was very unlikely that I could do anything for them; I promised, however, that I would try anyway.

The surgeon took me around his beautiful house and when we arrived in the bedroom he opened the drawer of a desk, pulled out a chest and opened it. It was full of precious stones and jewels. He handed it to me and said, "Get one." When I refused, he became more insistent. He took a handful of precious stones and a gold necklace and tried to put them in my pocket. I stepped back and he said, "Whatever you can do for us is worth much more than these jewels."

It was really painful for me to tell him that he absolutely could not rely on my vague promises. I was about to leave when a beautiful girl about twenty entered the room, "Let me introduce my daughter Simone," he said. She was extraordinarily beautiful and no one in the world, I thought, could have taken her for a Jew; she looked like the blonde Brunhilda of the Nibelungen.

I was horrified at the idea of this magnificent creature in a Nazi concentration camp. I rushed out with cramps in my stomach. Around the corner I threw up.

When I reached the command, I found my comrades in turmoil. Rome had just given the order to return to Italy. The situation was escalating on the Russian front and in Italy as well.

That night, in the dormitory, I told my comrades about my visit to the surgeon's house and we decided to try to solve the situation.

We would use the truck that was supposed to carry the archives of our office, and we would hide the surgeon and his family among the papers, folders and classifiers, putting a mattress on the floor.

There was no time to waste, and the next day we went by truck to Haukebosaka Street.

Just in view of the house we saw Simone locking the door. She said her father and mother had already left to hide with friends of theirs, while she was going to the house of a German officer who had offered to help her.

We told Simone that we were going back to Italy and that she could come with us if she wanted to. After a moment of hesitation she agreed.

We arranged Simone in the back of the lorry, where we had laid the mattresses and blankets. At the railway station the lorry was secured to a platform along with its precious and unsuspected cargo. We were a few wagons further on and, shortly after, the train left for its three-day journey to [Udine](#).

During the journey and at each stop there was a dense coming and going between the Nibelungen carriage and the rest of the convoy.

The news had leaked that there was a beautiful girl in the wagon and everyone wanted to bring her something to eat or drink.

One of my comrades fell desperately in love with Simone and stated vehemently that as soon as we arrived in Udine he would take her to his parents, who lived there, and married her. From that moment on, the others became more discrete with Simone.

In the early hours of the third day we arrived in Munich and had to change trains. We were told that the military equipment would proceed on its own. We helped Simone get out of her hiding place, and together with her boyfriend and me, we headed to the station restaurant for a drink.

Simone felt very cold; she was tired, terribly pale and terrified at the sight of the military police who at any moment could stop us for a check. I told her to walk more relaxed so

she wouldn't be noticed. But she trembled like a leaf and could not contain herself. We meet two large policemen and unfortunately they stopped us to check our documents.

Panicked because of Simone, I was preparing to say something in German to explain who she was, when Simone's boyfriend pulled out official documents (I later learned that he had falsified them in the Leopoli office) proving that Simone was a nurse in the Italian Army.

One of the giants raised his eyebrows and said, suspiciously: "Without a uniform?" Summoning up all my self-control and daring I said calmly: "Her uniform was ruined caring for a wounded German soldier on the train, and she had to throw it away". All of this was of course completely invented but they let us go! When we finally arrived at the restaurant, we sat down to order some tea, but Simone was shaking so much that she couldn't bring the cup to her mouth. We finally got back to the train and that same night we were in Udine.

My friend took Simone straight to his house, risking severe disciplinary punishment. I very much hope that Simone's story had a happy ending. It was better, I'd say, than the choice she was going to make to go live with a German officer.

After a period of isolation at the Udine quarantine camp, I returned to my regiment in Livorno.

## THE END OF THE WAR

The pre-armistice period at the regiment was characterized by daily escapes of soldiers who climbed over the enclosure at night, and by officers listening to Radio London without worrying about hiding.

Finally, the armistice came along with a sense of bewilderment, confusion and sadness. The regiment colonel had already disappeared as well as most of the men. A fellow member of mine had a farm in Migliarino Pisano about thirty kilometers from Livorno and he invited me to go with him to stay there until I decided what to do.

To reach Migliarino we had to walk the distance along the Via Aurelia, and we decided to do it at night. On our way north, we encountered several German patrols that preceded German armored and mechanized divisions moving south to occupy Rome.

My knowledge of German on that occasion turned out to be providential as there was a lot of resentment on the German side towards Italians, who supposedly "betrayed" them; somebody speaking their language had the effect of calming their anger. We had heard that several groups of Italian soldiers who had been strayed in the countryside had been rounded up by the Germans and shot.

Along the Aurelia we had found on the ground the cap of a German cannon that undoubtedly belonged to one of the many artillery batteries heading south. My friend picked it up with the intention of delivering it to the next German unit we met.

We had stopped at a vineyard that bordered the road to calm our thirst with some grapes and were preparing to resume our journey when suddenly we were dazzled by a powerful beam of light, while an irritated voice behind the light shouted the order, in German, to lay down our weapons.

"We're not armed," I replied in German.

"Then come forward with your hands behind your head," said the voice. We did as we were ordered until the voice, which was getting closer and closer, ordered us to stop, and at that point the light went out.

As our eyes got used to the darkness, I could distinguish a German officer sitting in a chair in the middle of the street with a cat on his lap, whom he was caressing.

My friend handed the cannon shell to one of the soldiers surrounding the officer and said we found it on the ground. The soldier grabbed it from my friend's hands, walked to the officer and said, "The two Italians stole this cap from our battery and tried to hide it but I took it back."

Such a blatant bad faith was too much for me: I protested strongly saying in German: "You are a dirty liar, you know very well that it is not true!".

Just as I said these words, I regretted it, fearing the reaction of the officer and his men; I gave them a justification to execute us. But my lively reaction seemed to have a calming effect on the captain who said, "I see you speak German well, where did you learn it?" I replied that I had been in Poland for more than a year and that I had learned German from a "blitzmädel" (auxiliary) I had known.

That, of course, was not true, but I did not want to tell him that my mother was German, fearing that he might insist that I join the German army, as the young soldiers in the Hermann Göring division had done earlier when we met them on the Aurelia.

The captain's face relaxed even further and he asked me where I had been in Poland. I replied that I had been serving at the Italian Transport Office in Lemberg (Leopoli) until recently. To these words he smiled slightly and said, "Do you know Café Lux in Lemberg?" "Of course!" I replied, "we used to go there most of the time." (I was careful not to mention the quarrels and punches with the German soldiers!) "And Mimi, does she always sing at Café Lux?" he asked again. "When I left, she was there, performing her strip-tease show," I replied.

The captain was now clearly pleased with this coincidence; he slapped his thigh resonantly and exclaimed, "Das aber!" (This then!)

He ordered two of his men to escort us to my friend's farm to avoid any possible harassment along the way we still had ahead. I thanked the lucky coincidence of Mimi and the Kafe Lux which aided this sudden change in our situation.

It was two o'clock in the morning when we arrived at the farm and we had some difficulty waking up my friend's relatives. But after a while they got organized and served us a dinner like we hadn't had in a long time.

I slept in a barn, with small mice running all over me in a joyful saraband, and the next day I took the first southbound train, which, despite the chaos in which the whole country was at that time, took me to Rome, where I met the wonderful girl, put on my way by the Virgin, who would later become my wife.

The German troops we had met on our way from Livorno to Migliarino Pisano occupied Rome a few days later. This started a sad period for both the city and the country now split in two.

The war took a decidedly unfavorable turn for the Germans, who became increasingly fierce. They were short of manpower in Germany and to make up for this deficiency they forcibly recruited men in the countries they occupied.

In Rome they suddenly blocked the access to the roads and grabbed the men, they loaded them on trucks and sent them to Germany. The fascists collaborated in this task and one day, while I was waiting at a bus stop, together with a young man I had met at the guesthouse where I was staying, a group of Fascists came up and seized him.

Why they took away only him and not me, God only knows.

This situation made it increasingly dangerous for a young man to walk the streets of the city, so I decided to hide in my uncle's empty apartment, where I gave English lessons to those (especially girls as they could move more freely) who already expected an upcoming Allied victory.

One of my pupils belonged to the anti-fascist partisan Resistance in Rome. He had false identity documents and told me that he could obtain for me a false identity card, as if issued by the German authorities, if I was willing to cooperate with them. They needed a man who would help eliminate ("take out") the fascist mayor of Rome, named Caruso. I refused. A few days later Caruso's body was found in the waters of the Tiber.

A short time later an Italian general, a relative of my uncle, came to live with me and together, every night, we listened to the Italian broadcast of Radio London in the hope of hearing some good news. Which finally arrived: the Allies had landed in [Anzio](#): Rome was about to be liberated!

I had another student, a university professor who worked with the Eastman Foundation. One day he came up with a story whose authenticity is certain.

He owned a villa in Anzio where he spent weekends. The last time he was there, a few days before our class, he said he was woken up by noises from the ground floor of the house. Thinking there were thieves in the house, he got up and was preparing to go down when suddenly the bedroom door opened abruptly and an American soldier in war setting broke in and told the professor to follow him because the captain wanted to question him about the deployment of German troops nearby.

The professor told the American captain that he was not aware of any German troops in Anzio, which surprised the American captain.

He therefore ordered the professor to get on his tank: "I want to see if you tell the truth" he said, and together they headed on the Via Appia in the direction of Rome.

They arrived at Porta San Giovanni without seeing a single German soldier. "O.K., you told the truth, let's go back." But the professor decided to get off at Porta San Giovanni, from where he could walk home: he wanted to be in Rome the next day to witness the entry of allied troops into the city.

The captain agreed, the professor got off the tank and walked home. But the Allies were not there the next day, neither the following day nor three days later; six months passed before the Allies arrived in Rome.

They had allowed the Germans to surround their bridgehead and were almost driven back into the sea. They would have reached Rome much earlier if they had not lingered so long. Not to mention the unnecessary human losses resulting from their immobility.

Meanwhile, the situation in my uncle's apartment was becoming increasingly untenable.

Two nice and good people - the doorman of the building, Domenico, and his wife Fidalma - took care of me and I did not know how I would pay them off.

Worse, the Germans issued an ordinance under which all the doormen of buildings in Rome would be held accountable if they were caught giving asylum to partisans or conscripts, as I was. The death penalty was also provided for doormen who did not comply. I could not expose the good Domenico and Fidalma to such a risk.

Fidalma had already risked dying when, going to the countryside to collect vegetables, she had been machine-gunned by an allied aircraft.

I therefore decided to leave my hiding place and look for a job: at the Vatican, at the embassies of neutral countries, etc. Soon, however, it became clear that the only real possibility was the Italian radio (then BIBJR) controlled by the Germans at the time.

I was hired as a typist for the English program. However, since the chief of staff had decided that no other employees should be recruited, they recorded me as the announcer for the English broadcast and I signed a sheet declaring my recruitment as such; I never even got close to a microphone.

Working at the radio station had the great advantage of having a pass with which to move freely even at night, and in addition, obtaining food rations, at that time judged abundant, and finally I had a good pay.

I worked at the radio as a typist until the Allied entered in Rome.

When they took possession of the station, they found in the archives the document bearing my signature. I was arrested and sent to Regina Coeli's preventive prison on charges of collaboration with the Germans as a radio announcer, which I had never done.

I stayed there three months waiting for the trial and it was not funny at all.

Thanks to the intervention of a general that Solange had known in Samos, my trial was celebrated on November 9, 1945 (facing a military court). I was acquitted with the full formula "For not committing the fact." Today I could have asked the State for damages, but at that time there was no such law,

Now a few steps back to remember how I met Solange, how we got married and the main stages of our married life.

It was 1943 and in Rome I had two main relatives I could count on: my uncle (Marquis) Edmondo Giustiniani (sons: Enrico and Raimondo, both celibate, and the latter in the diplomatic career as ambassador of Italy to Israel); the other was my cousin Germaine Mainetti daughter of Uncle Charles (1870) married to Policarpo Mainetti.

## MEETING SOLANGE

Germaine's house in Rome (Via Germanico 109) immediately became a welcoming place for me.

Their large family - Pol - Germaine - Mireille - Solange - Remo – Aldo - cheerful, united, hospitable, was far more attractive to me than Barba Edmond's.

One day, when I was still in the military, I had a leave and spent it in Rome at the Pluto Pension in Via XX Settembre near Porta Pia. I was invited to Germaine's for lunch, and I arrived a bit early. At that time there was only Mirella at home, as Solange was in Samos with her father, while the two boys were in boarding school.

Waiting for lunch I took an album of photographs and started browsing through it.

When I came to the photo of Solange - whom I didn't know yet - taken in the public gardens of Samos, I paused to look at her again and again.

It was the image of a pretty girl, with a clean and honest look; I liked her so much, so much! At that moment Germaine walked into the room and I asked her who that girl was. "C'est ma fille Solange!" she answered.

I went back to look at her again and again -- I couldn't take my eyes off. I'd move on to other photographs, turn the album sheets and then go back to that page. I remember whispering to myself! "Tu deviendras ma femme!" (You will be my wife!)

Back at the regiment in Livorno, I wrote a letter to Solange (who had since returned from [Samos](#)) telling her that I had met her through her photo. I asked her to write to me if she wanted to, to tell me what she was doing, her pastimes, her friends, the pull-overs she knitted, everything about her. I told her that hearing from her would comfort me in the loneliness and monotony of military life.

Solange replied to my letter, and we started a correspondence. So, when I went back to Rome after the armistice, after the episodes already told, I went to visit my cousin Germaine. When I entered the house I saw, in the front room, a girl that I immediately recognized (from the photo) to be Solange. She was sewing (years later she told me she had been working on one of Remo's shirts).

My affection for Solange grew as time passed and one day, as I hugged her shoulders, in the presence of others, she put her head on my shoulder.

That's when I felt, for the first time, the full reciprocity of the feelings I had for her.

One day, sitting on the veranda of Via Germanico, I wanted to kiss her on the mouth, but she backed away and said, "Quand nous serons fiancés" (when we'll be engaged).

I told her then - with a feeling of insecurity and apprehension, given the terrible uncertainty of the time - that I wanted to marry her. We called Germaine and I said, "Nous sommes fiancés." (We are engaged)

Germaine replied: "Il faudra le dire à Papa." (We must tell your father). So, a few days later, Pol put on his blue suit, and we retired to the big bedroom. We each sat on the edge of one of the beds and I officially asked him for Solange's hand, which I was granted.

Today it may seem a completely irresponsible decision to decide to marry, given not only our precarious financial conditions (we had a metal bed mesh and the clothes we were wearing) but also because of the general situation, which was pregnant with unknowns, because the war was still on. But evidently when you are young and with the enthusiasm of love, things do not seem so prohibitive. We would have lived in Via Germanico, of course. I later called that house "the bellows suitcase" because it seemed to have an unlimited capacity.

## THE MARRIAGE WITH SOLANGE

We married on February 26, 1946 in the church of San Gioacchino ai Prati, in the Spanish chapel. In the church there was a plea because of the drought that had lasted for many months. My witness was Jean Russo of Smyrna, for Solange, her father.

We received some insignificant gifts, mostly items already belonging to relatives. The only "new" gift was from UNRRA where I worked, consisting of a canvas bag containing a pair of sheets and two children's blankets - one pink and one light blue.

There was a reception in Via Germanico with refreshments, which was also attended by Tony and Catherine Solari (the latter English) whom I had met earlier.

During the reception, I was chatting with Catherine when I noticed Solange was gone. She had noticed that I was in Catherine's company (too much according to Solange) instead of taking care of her. She retreated to her bedroom, desperate, when Jeanne Pilippucci stopped her in the hallway and said to her: "Je te souhaite que toute ta vie soit heureuse comme elle l'est aujourd'hui!" (I wish you that every day of your life may be as happy as today) That was "the straw that broke the camel's back!" Solange threw herself on her bed and started crying.

I tracked down Solange later, but I only knew about what had happened years later.

We spent our honeymoon at the "vecchietta" (little old lady), owner of a beautiful room we rented near Castel Sant'Angelo, lavishly equipped with running hot water.

The closet was so big and tall that Solange couldn't hang her clothes. It had a double bed but we didn't sleep well. So, after a few days, we told the "old lady" that we would rather have separate beds. As Solange passed through the hallway, she heard two waitresses gossiping: "You know! the newlyweds split up!"

It had been planned that after the honeymoon we would return to Via Germanico, but we heard of the imminent arrival of Marcel (Pol's brother) with his wife Gigi and their daughter Jose, who had been freed from the concentration camp where they were interned in Greece.

We therefore rented a room at the Simini family apartment in Via dei Gracchi, where the Corpi sisters, old acquaintances of the Mainetti family, were already staying.

Solange was already pregnant with our Swikaki and I decided to look for a safer and more reliable job because UNRRA was certainly going to disappear at the end of the war.

I visited several oil companies whose exponents were still militarized, and it was immediately clear that the best opportunity would have been with Mobil Oil (Socony-Vacuum at the time), also because the company executive who interviewed me knew the Fidaos in Athens. In fact, after a short time I received an invitation to report and I was hired as secretary to the President Robert Frothingham.

We were at the beginning of 1946, and a period began for us when we felt around us a shield of security and prestige, even if the money was never enough. Until the day of traumatic break-up in 1968, after twenty-one years (see below).

Swikaki was born on November 1, 1946 in the Anna Clinic in Piazza Quadrata in Rome, where she was also baptized.

The gynecologist who followed Solange had prescribed "English salts", in rather excessive doses, which she regularly took and which accelerated childbirth. So, one night, at the Simini's, Solange started her labor.

I remember Germana, making the sign of the cross on Solange's belly with the image of the Madonna of Perpetual Relief (the same one the Nuns of Samos had given her on the "kaik" on the day of their departure).

The next morning Solange entered the clinic but Viviana was born only the next day at 1 am.

Informed of the birth of Swikaki, I rushed to the clinic. I saw our Swikaki in the crib, covered with the UNRRAP blanket and a hot water bottle at her back.

Leaning over Swikaki, Germana commented smugly "Ine kamomeni me to kompaso" (it looks like she was drawn with a compass).

After Solange's stay in the clinic, we had to return to Via Germanico, but the house was already fully packed since in the meantime the Mainetti Grandparents had also arrived from Greece, with Nella and their dog Bouboul.

But Grandfather was sick and the poor man died the day before they arrived. An old man left and a newborn came to replace him ...

Upon leaving the clinic Solange held Viviana in her arms and she looked like a teenage mother.

She looked so young - she herself felt uncomfortable. Solange wanted me to tip the nurses but I couldn't do it: I had just enough to pay for the taxi.

We arrived in Via Germanico with empty pockets.

Jesus says: "Trust in God's providence - why are you worried saying: "What are we going to dress with? What are we going to eat? Look at the birds in the sky, they don't care of tomorrow and still have enough to eat!"

At that time our only amusement was taking a walk in the streets around the block. We passed through Via Fabio Massimo where there was a magnificent pastry shop with plenty of goodies on display, all the more tempting after the long deprivations of war time. Every now and then we would buy a small luxurious, pistachio nougat of supreme goodness.

## GENOVA

In October 1947 I was transferred from Rome to the [Genoa](#) Headquarters of Mobil Oil. I left alone - Solange and Viviana would follow me later when I would find accommodation for us in Genova.

In that period, I would go back to Rome occasionally and once, when I arrived I asked Solange where the Sissina was and she told me she was hiding under the dining room table. It seemed to me that Viviana had grown up so much to go alone and hide under the table.

In April 1948 I went to pick up Solange and Viviana to take them to Genoa.

I had rented an apartment on the third floor of Via Majorana 4, in Bagnara (Quinto). I had it furnished and provided with all the necessary with money that Mobil Oil was fully anticipating.

When Caulton (the President) asked me how I was going to return that money, I was bewildered. "With the Christmas bonus and the 14<sup>th</sup> month salary!" I answered. Until 1953, the money from those two salaries went to pay off my debt to the Company and we never went on vacation.

It was the third night we went to sleep in Quinto's house and my Pussika starts crying, sobbing desperately.

I couldn't get her to tell me why she was so distressed. Finally, after much insistence and patient waiting, Solangizza confessed the reason for her agitation. Chiara, the maid, was spending too much money on groceries. We later knew that Chiara, very greedy with sweets, would eat abundantly, and let the grocer charge them to our account. So, the money I gave Pussika was not enough and she didn't dare to impose on Chiara nor ask me for more money. Shortly after we dismissed Chiara, although we wondered how we would do without her.

We did very well thanks also to Emma Boero, who came for laundry, and to 'Pastine' (Iva Seybald,) who took care of taking Sissinaki for a walk.

We named Iva "Pastine" because her knowledge of French was "français de cuisine". So, she called the soup with small pasta "pastine", the carpet beater "the batipan", the candle "la bougie" and so on. Years later we discovered that Iva had been with the Fantinos as Roberto's nanny to teach him French...

On January 1, 1951 we moved into the apartment in Via Vassallo n.1/21, where we are still living today. The owner at the time was Mrs Mattarelli who later sold the property to Mrs. Martini, who is now dead.

In 1952 I was sent to the U.S. by Mobil Oil for a period of three months for a training course. I left in early September on the ocean liner Constitution. Of course, Germana had moved to Genoa to be with Pussika.

The crossing lasted eight and a half days. Very pleasant. Onboard games in the morning, bouillon at eleven, cold buffet on deck in swimsuit for those who did not want to change and go down to the dining room; tea at five, cocktails in the evening, games (often Bingo) after dinner and finally dance with orchestra until late at night. At midnight the First Class orchestra would stop playing so we moved down to Second Class where there were a lot of young passengers and the orchestra played until two/three in the morning.

Walt Disney was on board at that time, and I had a brief conversation with him.

He had distractedly occupied my deck chair and had read a few pages of the book I had left on it. There were also his daughters, Sharon, 19, and Barbara, 15, whom I met every morning on deck sunbathing and chatting.

There was also the famous English playwright Terence Rattigan, the author of "The Prince and the Showgirl" (also a movie with Laurence Olivier and Marylin Monroe) a comedy that he was writing at the time.

Rattigan reminded me of Charlie Chaplin in "City Lights". In the evening, as long as he was under the influence of alcohol, we were close friends; but the next day, on the bridge, he barely recognized me and kept a distance.

The arrival in New York (for those who saw it for the first time the "skyline" of the metropolis was really impressive), checking in at the hotel; the first telephone contacts with the Fidao in [New Canaan](#); the courses at the Headquarters, as well as in Rochester and Albany; visit to Hyde Park with Roosevelt's grave; West Point Academy on the Hudson River; Bear Mountain where we spent the night in a beautiful mountain hotel-chalet with deer and wildlife that timidly approached attracted by the lights; Buffalo (Athletic Club) with swimming pool where it was mandatory to bathe naked (men only); Niagara Falls and the ride on the San Lorenzo River with the steamboat "Maid of the Mist".

Subway rides in New York with colleagues Reviglio and Menis. The latter was intrigued by the artificial breast advertisement which said: "With and without floating action" which he punctuated aloud: "Wizz end wizout floting ektion" with people turning their heads towards us, some smiling, evidently amused, others visibly shocked.

We used to go shopping, the three of us. I'd walk into the store with Menis and help him out with English. Reviglio waited outside since he did not dare to enter knowing what was going to happen. In fact, Menis had the clerks bring down all kinds of items from the shelves, then he said, "Tenk you, good bye."

The meeting with the cousins.

The first time Max came to meet me at New Canaan railroad station.

His resemblance to Papiki was incredible. His gestures, the tone of voice, everything, after many years of life in different countries, climates and environments.

In the car, on our way to Jay, he said, "Sing a Greek song for me." I sang "Yalò Yalò" and after a couple of verses it came back to him and he sang along with tears in his eyes. Birthplace, childhood memories and family ties always remain in your heart, indelible, for a lifetime.

The meeting with the cousins was not the friendliest. I later realized that they were a little apprehensive about how "the Italian cousin" would be. They kept a little defensive.

It was decided that I would spend my weekends with them in their beautiful home and one weekend Jay came to pick me up at the railroad station. He told me that they had guests at home that night and that he and Doy would prefer that I didn't mention I was Italian. "People here have certain prejudices that need to be taken into account," he said. "You can say that you work in Europe for Mobil Oil, a Company that is highly considered around here."

I reassured him, but with some perplexity about democratic America.

It is a fact, however, that even in those days gangsters, delinquents, shoe shiners, those who had the most humble jobs in America, were Italians. Today, Central and South Americans have replaced Italians who, nowadays, occupy important positions in the national context.

We should also bear in mind that Connecticut, where the cousins lived, is among the most traditionally conservative states in the United States, and that many of the Fidao's friends claimed to have ascendants among the 'Pilgrim Fathers' even of the "Mayflower", all of them strict Protestants.

As a result, there was still prejudice with respect to Catholics: the election of Kennedy, the first Catholic President in the history of the United States, had caused a stir. Racial discrimination though was particularly evident in relation to black people. In most hotels, restaurants and public places, black people were not admitted.

It was not only a question of skin color, as some in Italy simplistically, and also tendentiously asserted. Their somatic traits - their crushed noses, their thick lips, their thick curly hair, their miserable appearance, their raw language, their low level of education - made blacks unaesthetic, sometimes repulsive, in the eyes of the "refined" whites.

This phenomenon is not surprising, given that in Italy itself there was a similar attitude of the northerners towards the southerners. How many signs one could see in Turin, for example, reading "We do not rent rooms to southerners".

However, today, as far as our cousins in America are concerned, none of the above feelings has remained.

They have come to Italy twice to visit us; the old prejudices, both theirs and those of their friends, have disappeared. Once friends gave a cocktail party in our honor (Solange and I) and among those present there were many mixed couples: American husbands and Italian or French wives, who, by the way, knew Italy and Europe better than we do!

Our American cousins are among the people we love and value the most and we have reason to believe that our feeling is reciprocated.

Returning to us in Italy, in the summer of 1953 having finished paying the debt for the furniture, we went on holiday for the first time, to Ortisei.

The hotel was "L'Orlo del Bosco" (The edge of the woods) run by Mr. Holzknacht. We had a beautiful holiday; it was our first contact with the mountains, the Dolomites, which we love deeply today, with so much nostalgia. Jose came to see us, staying at the hotel with us.

After my return from United States, I was assigned to the office for the search of locations of new gas stations, and this period lasted about two years during which I was frequently away from home, traveling around Italy. My absences weighed on my Pussiki who felt lonely. I was always trying to get home as soon as possible, but I often stayed away a week or two in a row.

On May 29, 1954 our dear Pitzuka was born at the International Hospital in Genoa (Corso Firenze).

During her pregnancy Solange went through her check-ups and it showed the albumin in her urine had risen to alarming levels. Prof. Marchesi suggested hospitalization and I agreed. But who would take care of Sissina, with Solange in the clinic and me in the office? Germaine of course! She punctually arrived from Rome and Solange could enter the clinic. She underwent treatment to reduce the rate of albumin, among other things by eliminating salt completely from food.

But all problems disappeared with childbirth. The pink bow that had been hung on the main door of Via Vassallo to announce the birth of Pitzuka on May 29, was blessed by a procession passing through, celebrating the Marian Month.

In the summer of 1956 with the two-year-old Pitzuka, we went for the first time to Pedraces first at the "Nagler Hotel" and after a few years at the "Serena Hotel".

It was seven consecutive happy summer holidays, in the company of the Santero family.

The first year also with Mirella and Peppino and their daughters Gabriella and Daniela. Pitzuka was always teased by Daniela who had fun pushing her up the stairs, and Solange was worried.

One summer the Zizikia (Maria and Riri) with Filippo joined us, as well as Mrs. Cuneo with Daniela Alonsi.

We had so much fun with Ririco in those days and his jokes remained proverbial.

It was in Pedraces that Gabriella met Livio, and Rodolfo met Gaby. The kids often played with a pile of sand in front of the Nagler hotel, while Pitzuka's favorite pastime was the small stream, in front of the Post Office, across the street from the Hotel. Solange once found her with her feet and shoes soaking wet. She got a cold with cough and fever.

Another time, I was resting in our room in the afternoon, when a delegation composed of Gaby and the Swika appeared in front of me. Gaby said, "Uncle Joe, we want to talk to you about one thing: I got mad at Rodolfo throwing sand at me and so I did too, but Rodolfo's mom said she would give me a slap in the face if I did it again!!

Do you think that's right, uncle Joe?"

All of us walking together to Lake Sunpunt, with Pitzuka towed in her stroller; the strawberry and cream cakes at the lake hotel; the boat rides, the trout fishing! My climbs to the Sassongher; the famous excursion with Mirellou and Gabriella to Puezs, the patches of snow at the top on the bright green of the meadows under a clear sky and a dazzling sun. What a joy, my God, what a joy!

"My cup is full, it overflows."

Then the car rides to Brunico and Corvara on the black limousine with Franz the driver.

We also went to Andalo one year (because of problems with South Tyrolean irredentist terrorism) but we didn't like it that much.

Vigo di Fassa, on the other hand, was lovely: the trips to the Violet Mountain Lodge, Lake Carezza, Canazei with the double cable car to the Pecol Mountain, and further up to the Bellavista Lodge, where you can admire the wonderful view of the Marmolada-Pordoi-Sella group and the Sassolungo mountain.

Before and after the holiday in the mountains we went to the Lido Beach in Genova.

The beach umbrella, the big pool for adults and the small one for children.

One day a lady came to tell Solange, "Ma'am, come and see your little girl on the swing." Solange followed the lady and when she reached the swing she saw a group of ladies admiring the Pitzuka, stark naked, swinging up and down, completely oblivious of the people who had gathered around her.

The Pitzuka (she was three or four years old) having gone to the toilet, had taken off her bathing suit and on her way back had noticed that the swing was free (which was very rare) she had rushed to it, without taking care of putting her bathing suit back on.

In the afternoon dancing with the orchestra in the gardens of the Lido, with the ending piece called "raspa" dedicated specially to the children.

Then the trip to Turkey on the "San Giorgio" in 1965. Five days of outward travel, six days back with a 15 days stop in Bornova (Izmir) with the Zizikia..

Christmas '66 we spent in [Lausanne](#) with Aldo and Giovanna.

Wonderful trip in the snow to Barboleuza... to Villars ... Aldo's dog, Rex, who ate all the cheese prepared for the fondue; ... Aldo's face when, back from the office, Giovanna asked him to go back out to buy some more...

Then the summer holiday in Ibiza and the holiday in Samos, the visits in Spain in [Casteldefels](#) and San Benedetto del Tronto. Then to [Santo Stefano d'Aveto](#) for six years ... in Athens (with Jose) at the Grand Chalet in Kifissia, and two unforgettable trips to America (Long Island and then California) offered to us by our beloved girls.

But unhappiness did not fail in Via Vassallo - inevitable in the life of all men. André Frossard in "Dieu en Questions" says: "Cette indésirable n'attend pas qu'on l'appelle, et elle n'épargne personne."

My Pussika's disease and her internal bleeding.

I felt frozen every time she announced "black feces" to me. Her fainting.

Once she slipped from my arms and ended up on the floor. My prayer invoking God's help in despair. The nights spent sleepless, the light on, massaging her. The uncertain and mysterious diagnosis of doctors who could not speak out clearly.

After many years I realize, and I must admit, that my suffering and concern were due more to her psycho-nervous suffering than to my fear of some imminent danger.

Then the rheumatic pains of my Pussika, manifested for the first time with a tearful cry when she wanted to pick up baby Monica on their return from the U.S.

Long days, especially in winter and spring, spent in her dressing gown without being able to devote herself to some housework, with her spirits down, weeping in despair, and sometimes I wondered if I was suffering more than she did. Then the discovery of the Hong Kong pills and the sudden improvement which, alas, lasted "a summer night".

## **THE DISMISSAL FROM MOBIL OIL**

Another hard blow was my dismissal from Mobil Oil in 1968.

It was a succession of unfortunate events: I refused to extend my stay in Vienna to meet an American named Adams (then an unknown member of German Mobil Oil) who had expressed the desire to meet me. Then, at a meeting in Lausanne, I told the same obscure individual to get lost when he insisted on my taking on a responsibility that I did not have, as I was easily capable to prove.

Adams himself, after a time, was transferred from German Mobil Oil to Italian Mobil Oil, and became my boss and later the president of Mobil Oil Italy (!!). When he reached that position he forced me to resign.

Another low-league person, Italo-American Lou Roto, went out of his way to set Adams against me and promote in my place Renato Farina who had been on the verge of being fired; a rescue that Roto believed would help him win favor with Vice President Elio Virno, his brother-in-law. Poor Farina (a good person) came to my office one day to apologize for what happened.

The Adams-Koto tandem also succeeded in ousting the president of Mobil Oil Italiana, Headley, who was transferred to a secondary Mobil Company in Syria, leaving the green light for Adams' promotion to president of the Italian company.

So, when Adams called me to his office to tell me that there was no place for me in the Company anymore, I accepted it as inescapable, like the logical conclusion of a story that had simply come to an end after a period of incubation, and I almost felt a sense of relief.

Today, with the managers collective agreement (finalized only a few years ago) things would not have happened this way.

The Company must now write a letter to the dismissed manager detailing the reasons for the dismissal, against which the manager can appeal both in court and with the Managers Union. None of this was available then. I had seen many executives get fired in the past and I thought: "Now it's my turn,"

Everyone at Mobil was shocked to hear of my dismissal. Mario Rolando, Chief of Staff, immediately took the necessary steps to reach a compromise: dismissal yes, to satisfy Adams, but re-engagement in Rome where the Headquarters of Mobil had transferred.

Reflecting again and again on what had happened, it seemed to me that Adams' dismissal was excessive in relation to what had happened. I started thinking that there had to be some other reason that I ignored. And in fact, there was.

About a year after my dismissal (I continued to serve at Mobil for about twelve months as a consultant) I met in the hallway of the office the chief of staff of Mobil in Vienna, Hans Irion an old acquaintance of many meetings, to whom I told of my dismissal.

He exclaimed, "Did he do this to you?! Certainly, he was driven by jealousy, by rancor. Do you remember President Hesht's secretary, with whom you were hanging out in Vienna? Well, Adams came to Vienna to court her; he was in love with the girl and wanted to marry her," My reaction was immediate and excited: "My word Hans!! You only tell me now? Why didn't you warn me, in Vienna?" He answered: "At the time we were only suspicious, but after your departure it all became evident!!"

This fatality was added to everything else!

After careful thinking, Solange and I decided not to move from Genoa.

Swikaki was about to get engaged to Roberto, whom she, and we, cared for a lot. As for Pitzuka, we believed that suddenly transplanting her to Rome in an entirely new and unknown environment would be a serious handicap for her. By now we had taken roots in Genoa, and we decided to stay.

Adams promised to take an interest with the U.S. Consul so that I could be assigned the Presidency of the Italian-American Association. He didn't do anything about it,

Crovetto, the Chief of Staff, promised the world. "I have many friends and relationships with the other oil companies, you will see that we will find you a good accommodation, which you surely deserve." Some timid efforts (from Rome where the Headquarters of Mobil Oil had moved) did not give any results.

In a short time after I left Mobil Oil, I put on seven kilos. The nightmare was over, a new chapter opened.

Which is also expected to be the last.

Shortly after breaking up with Mobil Oil, I realized that retiring had certain advantages that I had not fully realized before.

First of all, the pleasant feeling of being one's master, without having to report to a superior and without having subordinates, both cases often give problems of "human relations".

Secondly, not being forced to observe office hours.

Initially, my pension was low mainly because the fourteen years during which I worked in Turkey were lost for the purpose of length of service, due to my non-payments of social security contributions, which were not possible at the time. Today, with the EEC, this problem has been eliminated. Over time my pension increased with extremely satisfactory seniority increments!

Its equalization was in line with the increase in the cost of living, which was then considerable.

Then, at Adams' own favorable opinion, I invested a large part of my TFR in a Joint Investment Fund, I.O.S. The Fund gave extremely remarkable results, the quotations were regularly published in all financial newspapers both Italian and foreign. At the growth rate of 15% a year, which the Fund's management had declared as a target, the capital invested doubled every five years. With such flattering prospects we decided to

sell the apartment we had purchased in Via Giovanni Amarena, which caused us problems with the tenants, investing the proceeds in I.O.S.

At that point the outlook seemed extremely flattering and every Saturday morning I consulted the financial newspaper "24 ORE" noting with great satisfaction that the Fund's shares were rising more and more. In a short time I made a considerable profit that gave me a lot of optimism. "Here now," I thought, "after all, I can leave money to my Pussika and our adored girls when they get married."

The husband of a friend of Swiky and Roberto we had met at Stanford, asked me "What activity are you engaged in?", I replied "I am in the privileged position of being retired." In fact, a feeling of trust had taken hold of me: "I am the master of my destiny and the captain of my soul\*."

At this point three facts happened that radically changed the situation.

The first was that a nosy American journalist had the mischievous idea of rummaging through and investigating the meanderings of an I.O.S. operation in Alaska, reporting that the plots the company had acquired in areas deemed to be rich in oil fields had been overvalued as oil extraction had not yet begun.

The rumor of this alleged irregularity spread rapidly among the I.O.S. investors, who rapidly withdrew their investments so that the Fund's quotations began a downward curve that did not stop. At one point, panicked, I jumped on the first train to Geneva and sold my shares. "Adieu veau, vache, cochon, couvée."

The second was that, as a result of a law promoted by the government on a proposal from The Minister for Labour, Mr Scotti (DC), the equalization of managers' pensions was carried out with a very unfavorable "punitive" procedure, so that my pension increased much less than the cost of living, with the result that it was worth less and less. That procedure is still in progress. There have long been talks of correcting it.

At this point, I had to look for a job, and in fact I worked for almost three years in various medium/small firms in Genoa until the day when (third point) Solange's health worsened - the pain and the bleeding and consequent depressive state - and I was forced to give up my activity in order to be entirely available to take care of her and the house.

That didn't stop me from continuing my studies in time clippings.

I worked on my theory of pleasant and unpleasant sensations (see); I devoted myself to fighting Communism with letters and articles on newspapers which, by the way, earned me six or seven letters full of insults and threats.

At a time when red terrorism was eliminating and "kneecapping" its supposed enemies, with the police almost inert, this created problems, including problems of conscience.

I wrote several letters to Brigadiers in prison (anonymously), to communist statesmen in Italy and abroad, to various writers and essayists who professed pro-communist ideas.

I put a lot of passion into it and it was very satisfying when, in my opinion, my letters were well written, my reasoning well set out. I didn't care that I didn't get a response, I was sure that my reasoning would have some positive effects on the recipient.

Another commitment, the essays I wrote (about fifteen) on different topics to satisfy my desire to know more, and possibly the truth, about certain topics.

I spent many pleasant hours in the libraries of the University of Genoa and other Universities, as well as at USIS in Milan and Rome. I also read foreign books on specific topics. The essay that engaged and amused me most was on the activities of multinational companies.

In fact, there were often conflicting rumors about their activities and I wanted to know more. I entitled the essay: "Multinational companies - good or evil?".

I chose the activities of four of the world's leading companies to develop my case; "Anaconda" in Chile, "Union Minière" in the former Belgian Congo, "Compagnie du Canal de Suez" and finally the "Anglo-Iranian" in Mosaddegh's time.

The librarian of the famous "International Institute for Strategic Studies" in London, was particularly helpful on the Anglo-Iranian subject. She gave me a copy of an unpublished book written by a former Iranian member of Parliament just in Mosaddegh's times.

Then my studies on our religion. These, in fact, began when I was eighteen years old and they continue to this day - but I had never carried out an in-depth, rational study until now.

A subject, religion, that has never stopped being of the deepest interest for me.

The study of the Bible (Old and New Testaments) with voluminous correspondence on various theological aspects; the reading of books on the Christian and Catholic religion; the last, and among the most fascinating: "Dieu en Questions" by André Frossard, a Jewish French converted to Catholicism, and "Dieu et la Science" by Jean Guilton, both members of the Académie Française.

More recently I have been working on the genealogy of our family, a study that requires an important amount of correspondence with relatives, registry offices, parishes, etc. scattered everywhere. All this to be able to know more about our ancestry and often just to be able to fill one or two boxes of the family tree.

I have left out important events and dates such as the marriages of our beloved girls and the birth of their children. I leave it to Swika and Pitzuka to talk more and more fully about it than I can do.

I will end my short autobiographical account with a page dedicated to Solange. She was my beloved companion for forty-five years today. What she has done over all these years in silence and self-denial is an example to our adored girls and their children. So be it.

Genoa, May 1991

## SOLANGE, MY LOVE!

I have spoken almost exclusively about myself in the previous pages and it would be extremely unfair to ignore the girl first, and then the woman, whom I had by my side and loved for forty-five years today. God bless you, my love, may He fill you with His grace. Amen!

Honest, always honest in thought and acting.  
Faithful companion, dedicated to the family.  
Sweet and affectionate, with no trace of malice.  
Sincere and clean, watch her when she laughs!  
Practicing her faith, respectful of anniversaries.  
Generous, caring for others before herself.

**NOW TURN THE PAGE AND YOU WILL FIND OUT  
THAT THE ABOVE CORRESPONDS  
TO THE TRUTH.'**

May 1991



Samos 29/04/1925 - Genova