

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Fascism in Italy Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 641

VINCENZO ORLANDO

Interviewed

by

Elisa Calabrese

on

June 5, 1986

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: VINCENZO ORLANDO  
INTERVIEWER: Elisa Calabrese  
SUBJECT: World War II, Cassino, education in Italy,  
Fascist rule  
DATE: June 5, 1986

C: This is an interview with Vincent Orlando for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Fascism in Italy Project. It is taking place in Lorain, Ohio on June 5, 1986.

Thank you very much Mr. Orlando for consenting to this interview. Can you start off telling me where you were born, when you were born, and your life style as a child in Italy?

O: I was born in 1926. I grew up in a town by the name of Montenero. As a matter of fact, we have a Montenero Society here in Lorain. I grew up with a family of seven brothers and one sister. I grew up in Montenero, which is farmland; there were no factories or industries. We used to raise horses, breed horses. In my childhood I used to go to school, and after school we used to go to the fields and play with the horses. We saw the horses grow; that was our life. I only went to elementary school, but I had four brothers that went to high school and one became a doctor. I didn't go to college because I was involved with my father in his line of business.

C: Were you the oldest?

O: No. I was the third boy. I was very attached to my father. I grew up around my father; he was a very educated man. This was my life, elementary school and farming.

I remember those days under the fascists, Benito Mussolini. While we were in school we used to have uniforms. Mussolini took youngsters from fifteen on. The boys in elementary school were called belilla. The females, the girls, were called piccoli italiani. They had uniforms and the boys in school had them in elementary school. These were fascist uniforms. When you used to go to school the teacher would come in and we used to get up, "Viva la duce!" This was the good morning for the teacher. We had to get up and salute. This was the routine. We used to go out and march as a belilla. Under Mussolini's time there would be times that the teacher, especially in the Spring and Fall when we started school, would take us on these two or three times a week. We used to go out and play a little bit, but mostly it was marching. Marching was a fascist law that they had. If you went to high school you usually didn't train. If you were interested in the party, you joined the party. You were already trained from the elementary school so once you went in you had training. Then you stepped up with the fascist party. This was the life when I was in elementary school.

I used to work on the farm; I didn't go to college. My father was against Mussolini. He never became a fascist in his life. While Mussolini was in power from 1923 until the war was over my father was always against the fascists, but he never told us kids not to do this or that. He believed in going to school and doing what the teacher told you. Now I realize even if he wanted to say something, he couldn't. There were the laws, and that was it. Otherwise, he would have been in trouble. If the party knew he was against them too much, one way or another they would get my father. He was against the party, but he minded his own business. Of course, in those days there were people with the fascists, and people with the king. That is why Italy was in a big mess during the war because even the Italians were split in their loyalties.

For myself, I can't say anything against Mussolini. In the First World War my father was on the front with Tito Zamboni; he was a general. Tito was a socialist in history. My father was not with the socialist party, but he was good friends with the man from the war. Tito Zamboni was the one who attempted the life of Benito Mussolini in 1923 when he was making a speech. Zamboni had a rifle and two other guys were with him, but he was thrown down. Otherwise, Mussolini's life would have been gone. Tito Zamboni was exiled in the Adriatic Sea. He was exiled from the time he attempted Mussolini's life until Mussolini's fall in 1943. Then Zamboni was released and had a free life again. When he was released Zamboni became presidente di l'official in concerto di Italia. When he died he died

with this honor of being the presidente.

That is why my father was against Mussolini, because his very good friend was. He paid quite a few visits after the war when Zamboni took over in Rome. He used to go back and forth and visit.

During the war Mussolini was a good man. My father had money in the bank and was well-off to bring up a family. We didn't have trouble until the war came. When the war came we had everything; my childhood was beautiful. I was never in the Army.

After 1944 we started life again. We started to breed horses again. After the war though, the value of money was depleted; \$100,000 might have been worth \$50.

In 1950 I decided that I wanted to immigrate to Canada. I was twenty-three years old then. It was okay here, but it was not the same as before, so in 1951 I went to Canada.

From Canada I went to Lorain and met my wife. She is from Montenero too. We got married. We went back to Canada to live for two and a half years. After two and a half years we moved back to Lorain because her family was here.

- C: You said you went to the woods to hide. Did you stay there? How was that when the Germans came in or the English?
- O: Our horses would be tied in the woods until after sundown. After sundown I would take them out, but before sunrise I had to put them back in the woods.
- C: How long did this go on?
- O: For two months. My younger brothers would bring me food because the soldiers didn't bother the young ones.
- C: The Germans never looked in the woods?
- O: No.
- C: Did anyone ever get shot?
- O: Yes, some people. They would get shot because they would run away.
- C: Before the war give me a typical day during the week when you worked and give me a typical Sunday when people were visiting. Tell me a typical day.

O: During the day we would go to school.

C: What time did school start?

O: School started at 9:00. We would go to school until noon. We would go back again at 1:00 until 5:00. Then they changed it and we went from 9:00 until 3:00. When I went home I would eat. After I ate I would go to the barn.

C: Tell me a little bit about Sundays.

O: On Sunday the first thing we did in the morning was milk the cow on the farm. We also had to go and get the water with a barrel and the horse. Then we would go to church. We would go to the bars, or play bocce.

END OF INTERVIEW