

INTERVIEW WITH RUTH SPRUNG TARASANTCHI

I was born as Ruth Sprung, in Yugoslavia in 1933, so, I am 82 years old. I was born in Sarajevo, in Yugoslavia by that time, but it doesn't exist anymore, nowadays it is Bosnia. We had a normal life, ordinary. My dad was an appreciated doctor and he was a very good one. His friends were Muslims, Catholics, protestants. We lived normally, without any racism issues.

Six millions Jews were murdered. Behind every single victim there is a story. "Nenhuma Ideia Uma Vida", memories of Holocaust survivors.

Ruth Sprung Tarasantchi was only a child when war began. The persecution started in Sarajevo, where they lived. Ruth's grandfather was only a grain seller, but anti-Semitism was growing stronger.

So, they thought he was a very rich man who had tons of money and gold... Silliness. Those were the things people thought about Jews. One night they came and took my grandfather and took him to the police. They tortured him, took off all his nails from hands and toes, in order he told them where was his treasure. Then, my dad saved himself, run away from Yugoslavian army, got back to Bugojno and heard this history. So, he went to police station and asked them to release my grandfather and, afterwards, taught him how to pretend he was crazy. He actually convinced people he was crazy, my dad wrapped his feet and hand and took him home. After it, he noticed it wasn't safe to us stay there.

In order to run away from Jews persecution, Ruth's father got fake documents to their family. They went to Split, in Croatia and just after were deported to a village in north of Italy called Castelnuovo Don Bosco.

There were some villages there that were almost empty because people got old and the young ones went to bigger cities, man were in war, so, there were lots of empty houses and the Italian government put us there. We couldn't get out of the village.

Right before Ruth's family had been sent to the concentration camp, she and two other friends were sent to an orphanage in Torino. There, Ruth suffered bullying from other Jewish kids because her Italian wasn't good. The city started to be bombed and they'd to go back to the village.

Then, Hitler knew we were there. It wasn't just us, in this village there were around 30 people, and there were other villages with 20, 30 people. So, he wanted Mussolini to give us in. Mussolini denied and sent us to a concentration camp in south Italy called Ferramonti.

Ferramonti concentration camp imprisoned around 3.800 Jews during the war. Italians did not exterminate the prisoners in gas chambers, as Germans used to do in other camps. Although they haven't seen death this close, Ruth and her family never left fear behind.

We were interned, camp was fenced, there were tents and we got there by train. There were tents. Men stayed in one and women in the other. We, as a family, had some kind of "room" for us, that my mom divided with a sheet and made a little house for us.

Even though it wasn't an extermination camp, interns in Ferramonti didn't have a great life. Hygiene conditions were awful, what helped diseases proliferation.

It was bad, because water wasn't enough to clean everything. Sometimes, a sister of my mom asked the guards to go to a river near the camp to do the laundry, but she had to do it very fast. Everyone in the concentration camp got malaria, except for five people: my mom, my sister, me, my aunt and my cousin.

American and British armies were the ones that freed Ferramonti. After they were released, Ruth and her family run over some Italian cities before going to Rome. Her father didn't want to stay in Italy, because he was afraid of a new persecution.

It didn't take long until a British army come over and, between them, there was a Palestinian group. When they came to the camp, they entered to see what exactly was that place. When they heard we were Jews and that there were children there, the Palestinian Jews were very happy. We got on their truck, went to a walk, sang Jewish songs. It was a very beautiful moment.

During the war, two moments marked Ruth's life forever. The air shooting was a common technique during World War II and stood forever in the survivor's memory.

I guess when I was shot in a train in Napoli. And after it, when we were shot in the camp and had to run away to the mountains. That was tough, because we were

being shot, and in a little highway, there were some small trees, where we hide. My sister, clumsy, fall in the middle of the highway. So, my dad had to save her and I was so scared that he might get shot. He was completely exposed. The planes were flying low.

The fear of losing her dad was constant. The only reason they still alive was because of him and he was the one who could make them go to other cities after the camp was released. When her dad went out to settle how they would travel through Italy, Ruth felt scared.

There was only one bed and my dad wasn't there. And he was taking too long. So, there was a sink, dripping... Ting, ting, ting, and my dad wasn't coming. So, me and my mom were listen to the dripping and he was taking so long. That was terrible, imagine what would happen if something bad happened to him, what my mom would do with two girls?

Sprung family chose Brazil because there was a lack of options. United States were too full and Australia was too far. Nowadays, Ruth is one of the directors of "Museu Judaica de São Paulo". Handling photos and documents from Holocaust victims, she knows her dad was lucky by saving the family.

It's very important to me that we always talk about it, that we never forget. Everyone needs to know, there still people denying it, that we've made it up. This has to be shown to the world. Everything that happened needs to be known, you kids need to know, not just you. Your children, your grandchildren. This is so important, it's part of our history and we can't deny, we can't forget. We don't need to live it again, but we need to know what happened.