

Biographical profiles

SILVIO OTTOLENGHI

Ottolenghi was born in Pisa on 14th May 1886, and moved to Turin in 1905. After having tried his hand at various jobs, in 1910 he began to work as a self-taught photographer, a career that would make him famous. In 1920 he became a photojournalist, one of the first in Italy, for the daily newspaper *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, and the weekly insert *Illustrazione del Popolo*. On 30th July 1931, he registered the trademark for his shop, with the motto that would accompany him throughout his life, "Nothing escapes my lens". This slogan would enter the dialect of the people of Turin. During his career he carried out photographic assignments for the highest levels of State, in particular for the kings of Italy, and in 1934 he was called upon to document the meeting between Mussolini and Hitler that took place in Venice. Due to the racial laws, he was forced to sell his company to one of his associates, Luigi Bertazzini. After the end of the Second World War, Silvio Ottolenghi began a dispute with Bertazzini over the ownership of the trademark.

Well before 4th May 1944, when the report on the seizure of his assets was written, Ottolenghi realised the danger his family was in and thus he, his wife, and one daughter took refuge in Milan with their other daughter, Elena. His son Felice was arrested, tortured by the SS, and deported to Auschwitz, where he died in 1944. When the war ended, Silvio Ottolenghi returned to Turin to continue his work as a photographer.



STELLA VALABREGA

Born in Turin on 10th June 1923, Stella Valabrega's parents were Michele and Maria Irene Roscetti. The entire family, including her three brothers Mario, Gino, and Aldo, lived at #25 Via Po, in Turin. Due to the racial laws of 1938, Stella, who was fifteen years old, could no longer attend school. After the armistice of 8th September 1943, Stella joined the resistance under the code name "Lucia", as a partisan fighter in the Italo Rossi division. Her fight continued until 5th December 1943, when she was arrested, along with her father and mother. In the hands of the Fascist Republicans, they were taken first to Le Nuove prison in Turin, where they were detained until 17th January 1944. From Turin they were taken to Fossoli (Modena), where the Italian transit camp was situated. There they remained in captivity until 22nd February 1944, when they were deported to Auschwitz, arriving at the death camp on the 26th. The same journey was taken by Primo Levi, who wrote about it in his famous book, "If This is a Man". Whilst her parents died in the gas chambers upon arrival, Stella Valabrega survived the selection, and was given the number 75697. Stella remained interned in Auschwitz until 30th December 1944. Whilst all this was taking place, on 10th June 1944 the EGELI in Turin seized the family's movable property. Like thousands of other prisoners, Stella was forced to undergo the so-called "Death Marches", forced transfers from Auschwitz to camps within Germany. Stella was taken to Bergen Belsen camp, whence she was liberated on 15th April 1945.



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NATALIA LEVI GINZBURG

Natalia was born in Palermo on 14th July 1916, the daughter of Giuseppe Levi, a university professor from Trieste, and Lidia Tanzi, a Catholic from Milan. She grew up in Turin in an intellectual and anti-Fascist environment. The Levi family's clear position against the government led to continual harassment until Giuseppe Levi was arrested for anti-Fascist activities in 1934. These events are recalled in her famous book, *Lessico familiare* (Family Sayings), published in 1963. In 1938 she married Leone Ginzburg, also Jewish, a man of letters and an anti-Fascist, the son of Russian immigrants, with whom she had three children. In 1940, she and the children followed her husband into exile in Pizzoli (Abruzzo). This situation did not diminish their anti-Fascism. Their commitment continued before and after the armistice, and culminated in the death of Leone Ginzburg in Regina Coeli prison, having been tortured by the Fascists after his arrest. Natalia returned to Turin at the end of the war, and one of the first things that she did was to ask for the return of the flat at 11 Via Pallamaglio. It had been almost emptied due to the previous harassment by the Fascists, and was seized by the EGELI in March 1944. This handwritten request was dated 20th December 1945, and was signed: Natalia Levi, widow Ginzburg. In the Piedmontese capital, Levi Ginzburg began her collaboration with the Einaudi publishing house, wrote numerous books, and established herself as one of the most important Italian intellectuals. In the 1980s, she was elected to Parliament for two terms, in 1983 and 1987, and was active in initiatives against racism, and for the defence of rights.



VITTORIO LEVI

Vittorio Levi was born in Carrù (Cuneo) on 15th February 1880, the son of Felice and Emilia Fubini, and was a lawyer. Throughout the 1930s, Vittorio Levi lived with his family at #92 Via Massena, in Turin. After the racial laws of 1938 came into force, as the condition of Italian Jews worsened, Levi decided to emigrate and leave Europe. After staying in Paris for a while, Levi, his wife Amalia, and their sons Fausto and Mario left the port of Saint-Nazaire, reached the United States by ship, and landed in New York on 19th May 1940, one month before Italy entered the war alongside its Nazi ally. One year after their arrival, Vittorio's son, Mario Levi, enlisted in the American army. However, he was seriously wounded during training, and was thus not able to return to Europe to fight.

Meanwhile, in Turin, between the 20th and the 29th of July 1944, an inspection was carried out by the experts of the San Paolo Institute. They had been appointed to draw up an inventory of the property in the possession of the lawyer Vittorio Levi, located at his home at #92 Via Massena. The building was then put at the disposal of the Standort Kommandantur, the German garrison command in Turin. At the end of the war Vittorio Levi and his family returned to Italy, with the exception of his son Mario, who chose to remain in the United States, where he practiced as a psychologist.

