

CLARA SORIANO

From Rhodes Island to Auschwitz

VOYAGE TO AUSCHWITZ

It was a summer's day
Enriched with the sun's rays
Shining and full of life.
A people's hearts were being broken.
Born on the island of Rhodes
Higgledy- piggledy they
all were mixed,
Pressed and compressed
into human lines,
Their eyes protruding in horror,
Prepared for the cruel fury.

You were the front of the lines,
You, the Younger and stronger,
To keep up the pace - forward,
Forward, march....
March to the death.

You the older and the aged -
For you there is no mercy -
Hasten your tired steps.
Their cruel rules you must accept.
There is no choice.
March, push
To the doors which mark your death.

What can we say to our children
Their eyes distended by fear
In hunger and tears
Pressed and compressed
in the cattle wagons?
No water, no bread.
The pangs of starvation,
The anger, frustration.
Shed your tears beloved ones.
The memories of your grannies
May your spirits calm.

The savages have decided
To ensure your end.
No mercy touches their hearts.
The stories of your grannies
Make no mark on them.
It's the children we must tell
About our faith,
The belief in only one G-d.

No! We have not been abandoned.
We wish to believe
In the pages of history -
Those inglorious pages,
Those black, black pages
Written about us -
Where we shall see the final defeat
Of the Teutonic barbarity.

Innocent are the poor infants,
Innocent our beloved cherubs,
Rocked tenderly with love
in the arms of their mothers.
The halos of these martyrs, "these mothers,"
Crown them perfectly.
They loved these innocents so tenderly,
These children, their children, who cries
Are the whimpering of violins
Unable yet to articulate
The sweet name" Mama."

Immaculate and pure
Are these souls of these innocents
But nothing will ever touch these monsters
Even at death's doors
And the children must also
continue to march

Guards and torturers
They too are born in the womb
These German Ostragoths.
All of us, they want,
All till the very last.
March, march, shove continuously
Under threats of violence.
A defenseless flock.
At the crematorium doors
You shall find your rest.

A dense black cloud
Exudes from the chimney.
Suffocated and gassed
Is to be their end.
Turned into dust
For the wind to blow away.

THE MARTYRS OF RHODES AND COS

For fifty years
you have slept
While we with desperate
shrieking screams
Have shed the
most bitter tears
At your lack of
proper burial.
While you rest in
eternal dreams,
We live in eternal hell,
Since you suffered such
an Unjust and
atrocious death.
By this sadness we
are afflicted.
By this memory we
are haunted.
Half a century has
already gone

Since that past so
cruel and dark
Our pain so alive
and enduring.
You who hear us from
the hereafter,
You who share with us
our anguish,
Is it not enough
That you were sacrificed?
You became the holocaust
For the glory of our faith?
Forgive us
for lamenting,
And disturbing your
tranquility.
There is no limit
to our suffering
We pray that for eternity
You will rest in peace.

Clara Soriano was born in Rhodes Island. She was in Auschwitz, Theresienstadt and Dessau. After liberation, she went to the Congo and came to South Africa in 1974 with her husband. She has a son and two daughters.

Source: "IN SACRED MEMORY" Recollections of the Holocaust by survivors living in Cape Town, edited by Gwyne Schrire.