Volevo solo vivere
Gli italiani di Auschwitz ci raccontano la Shoah

un film di
Mimmo Calopresti
Press Kit
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Steven Spielberg and the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education present

I ONLY WANTED TO LIVE
(VOLEVO SOLO VIVERE)
a documentary by Mimmo Calopresti

produced by
Gagè Produzioni, Wildside Media
in co-production with Rai Cinema, ventura film and RTSI-Televisione Svizzera

FESTIVAL DE CANNES
OFFICIAL SELECTION
OUT OF COMPÉTITION

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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The Testimonies collected in the film are those of:
Andra Bucci
Esterina Calò Di Veroli
Nedo Fiano
Luciana Nissim Momigliano
Liliana Segre
Settimia Spizzichino
Giuliana Tedeschi
Shlomo Venezia
Arminio Wachsberger
Testimonies from the archive of the USC Shoah Foundation
Institute for Visual History and Education

Directed by Mimmo Calopresti

Executive Producer Steven Spielberg

Produced by Mimmo Calopresti - Gagè Produzioni & Laurence Hoffmann - Wildside Media

For the USC Shoah Foundation Institute
Douglas Greenberg, Executive Director
Kim Simon, Executive in Charge of Production
Mark Edwards, Producer

Co-produced by Rai Cinema, ventura film, RTSI – Swiss Television

Associate Producer Francesca Alatri

In collaboration with Comune di Roma
Ambassador Mel Sembler

Edited by Massimo Fiocchi, Valerio Quintarelli

Original Score Federico Badaloni, Rachel’s

Post-production Cinecittà Digital

Running Time 75 min.
SYNOPSIS

Nine Italian citizens survive deportation and internment in the Auschwitz death camps. Nine stories through which we follow the most significant events of this harrowing experience: the enactment of the racial laws in Italy, the futile escape attempts, the deportation, the separation from other family members, the miraculous survival in Auschwitz, and liberation with the arrival of the allied soldiers.

Words that we may not be hearing for the first time, but which narrate the many aspects of these tragic accounts: from the most intimate and personal to the more well-known and cruel. These individuals, through their testimonies, are not afraid to reveal feelings of tenderness and compassion, as well as moments of happiness.

Mimmo Calopresti made this film by viewing and selecting from the hundreds of Italian testimonies collected in the archives of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, as well as archival footage and photographs taken from the personal photo albums of the survivors.

NEWS

• I Only Wanted To Live (Volevo solo vivere) premiered in Rome at a ceremony for the Day of Memory in January, 2006. Organized by the Comune di Roma’s office of the Mayor, the premiere was attended by approximately 1,000 guests including Mayor Veltroni, students, members of the government, the local community, and friends. The screening was held at the Auditorium, Rome’s premier concert hall, designed by architect Renzo Piano and commissioned by Mayor Veltroni in 2000.

• Since its premiere, the film has had a national broadcast in Italy, and a theatrical release in Switzerland as well as five Italian cities: Rome, Florence, Turin, Milan, and Padova. It has also been released on DVD in Italy.

• I Only Wanted To Live (Volevo solo vivere) was nominated for a 2006 Donatello Award in the category of Best Feature Length Documentary. The Donatello Award is the main national film award in Italy. In addition, the film won the Golden Phoenix Grand Prize at the Jewish Film Festival in Warsaw in 2007.

• The film was chosen to screen (in the Official Selection, Out of Competition) at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival. Since then it has screened at the United Nations in New York and at film festivals internationally, including; Jerusalem; Montreal; Melbourne and Sydney; Boston; Palm Beach; Washington DC; Palm Springs; Atlanta; Los Angeles; Barcelona; Trinidad; and San Francisco.
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE SURVIVORS FEATURED IN THE FILM

Andra (Alessandra) Bucci
Born in Fiume on July 1st, 1939, she was 4 years old when, with her grandmother, her mother, her sister, her cousins, and her aunt and uncle, she was arrested and deported to the Trieste concentration camp. She was later transferred to Auschwitz where she was liberated in 1945 when she was 6 years old and believed that life in the death camp was “normal life”.

Esterina Calò Di Veroli
Born in Rome in 1928, everyone called her «Persichella» (“little peach,” in Roman dialect) because of her rosy complexion. She was no more than a girl in 1944, when she was arrested along with her brother-in-law while she was visiting her sister who had just given birth. She was transported to Fossoli and then to Auschwitz-Birkenau. She was part of the group of prisoners who were forced to reach Bergen-Belsen in the infamous “Death march.” Among the few who survived this terrible journey, there was a group of Roman girls, who met up again and shared the last, terrible days in the camp. There, they also met Settimia Spizzichino and, after the liberation of the camp, on April 15th, 1945, all of them together finally managed to return to Rome with the help of a group of Italian prisoners of war who had also been liberated.

Nedo Fiano
Born in Florence, he was 18 years old when he was arrested by Italians on February 6th, 1944. He was imprisoned in the Florence prison, and from there he was taken to the Fossoli camp. He was deported to Auschwitz on May 16th, 1944, with the rest of his family, of which he was the only survivor. He was liberated in March of the following year in Buchenwald, and today he is one of the most significant figures among the “witnesses of memory.” Milanese by adoption, he published the book “A 5405 The Courage To Live,” Monti Edizioni, Varese 2003. In it he writes: “The thing that has connoted my entire life was my deportation to the Nazi death camps. My entire family ended up with me in Auschwitz, they were all exterminated. At eighteen I became an orphan and this experience, which was so devastating, made me a different man, a witness for the rest of my life.”

Luciana Momigliano Nissim
Born in Torino on October 20th, 1920, after September 8th she escaped to Valle d’Aosta. She was friends with Primo Levi and Wanda Maestro, and with them she decided to join the Giustizia e Libertà (Justice and Liberty) Partisan formation, but they were all arrested and deported Fossoli and, in 1944, sent to Auschwitz. There, and in the camps where she was subsequently transferred, she worked as a medic in the infirmary for the prisoners. She escaped during a death march.

Liliana Segre
Born in Milan, her mother died when she was just a baby and she was raised by her father and by her maternal grandparents. Her family was not very religious, and they baptized her in 1938, in an attempt to protect her from the racial laws. In 1943, when the Nazis occupied the Italian territory, Liliana was only 13: she tried to escape to Switzerland with her father, but they were turned away at the border and arrested by the Italian border guards. They were
handed over to the Nazis, they were incarcerated in the San Vittore prison, and then Liliana and her father were deported to Auschwitz. They were separated upon their arrival and they never saw each other again. In the meantime, her grandparents had also been deported. Among all of them, only Liliana survived.

**Settimia Spizzichino**
Born in Rome, she was deported along with her mother, her sisters and a niece, in the raid of October 16, 1943. Thanks to her tenacity, she was the only woman among the more than 600 who were deported on October 16th to survive the internment and the camp’s “medical experiments.” She was liberated in Bergen Belsen after the infamous Death March, and she returned to Rome where she has been one of the main witnesses of the Shoah. She passed away a few years ago.

**Giuliana Tedeschi**
Born in Milan on April 9th, 1914, she was arrested in Torino in 1944 with her husband Giorgio, while their two daughters, 1 and 4 years old, were saved, as they were hidden in a convent. She was deported to Fossoli and from there she was taken to Auschwitz and then to Ravensbruck and Malcow, she even survived death marches. After the war, she was a witness in several war crimes trials.

**Shlomo Venezia**
Born in Salonika on December 29th, 1923, after the German occupation he escaped to Athens where he participated actively in the Greek Resistance. He was arrested in 1944 and deported with his family to Harari and then to Auschwitz. He is one of the few survivors among the group of prisoners who were in charge of cremating of the bodies – called the «Sonderkommando» - and he participated in the famous and desperate revolt of October 7th, 1944. He survived death marches to other concentration camps.

**Arminio Wachsberger**
Born in Fiume in 1919. In 1937, after he had lived in Rome for some time, he married Regina Polacco, a Jewish girl he met during that time. They had a daughter, Clara, born on February 11, 1938. The entire family, including little Clara, who was five years old and sick, was deported on October 16th, 1943. Regina and Clara were sent immediately to the gas chambers on October 23rd, upon their arrival in Auschwitz. Arminio survived, mostly thanks to his knowledge of several languages, including German. Starting at the time of the raid, he became the interpreter between the SS and the arrested Romans. In the camp, he continued to be used in this capacity by the Germans and, in particular, by Dr. Mengele, the doctor who used the prisoners as human guinea pigs for his experiments. He was transferred to several other camps and was liberated by the U.S. Armed Forces. When he returned to Italy, he lived in Milan, where he recently died. Among the people mentioned in his interview is General Augusto Capon, father-in-law of Enrico Fermi, winner of the Nobel Prize in physics, who was also arrested on October 16th, 1943 and killed upon his arrival in Auschwitz. It was Wachsberger himself who, after the war, informed Fermi of his father-in-law’s fate.
In 1994, Steven Spielberg established Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation to videotape and preserve testimonies of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses before it was too late.

As of January 1, 2006 Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation became a part of the University of Southern California’s (USC) College of Letters, Arts & Sciences.

The mission of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute is to overcome prejudice, intolerance, and bigotry — and the suffering they cause — through the educational use of the Foundation’s visual history testimonies.

The Shoah Foundation Institute interviewed Jewish survivors, homosexual survivors, Jehovah’s Witness survivors, liberators and liberation witnesses, political prisoners, rescuers and aid providers, Roma and Sinti survivors (Gypsy), survivors of Eugenics policies, and war crimes trials participants.

Having collected nearly 52,000 videotaped testimonies in 56 countries and 32 languages, the Shoah Foundation Institute is now working with a global network of partners to provide the general public with broad access to the archive and develop and support educational programs and products based on the Foundation’s testimonies.

The Shoah Foundation Institute has produced 10 documentaries that have been broadcast in 50 countries and subtitled in 28 languages, including Broken Silence, an international documentary series with five films in Spanish, Russian, Czech, Polish and Hungarian. The Foundation has also produced 16 educational products including interactive online exhibits available for free via the Shoah Foundation Institute’s website at http://college.usc.edu/vhi.

**THE USC SHOAH FOUNDATION INSTITUTE IN ITALY**

The Shoah Foundation Institute interviewed more than 400 Holocaust survivors and other witnesses in Italy from January 1998 until December 1999. More than 40 Italian interviewers and 20 videographers devoted their time to this effort. The majority of interviews were recorded in Rome and Milan as well as in Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Naples, Trieste, Turin, and Venice.

The Italian collection of testimonies includes the experiences of Jewish survivors, political prisoners, rescuers and aid providers, Sinti and Roma survivors, and war crimes trials participants.

The entire collection of more than 400 testimonies recorded in Italy is now available for public viewing and for educational use at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome.
MIMMO CALOPRESTI

Born in Polistena on January 4th, 1955
In the Seventies, he moved to Torino along with his family.

In the beginning of his career, he made independent social documentaries.

1985 Awarded 1st prize at the Torino Cinema Giovani
Festival with the video *A Proposito di Sbavature*
(About Smudges).

For RAI he directed:

1991 *Paolo ha un lavoro* (Paolo Has a Job)
1992 *Paco e Francesca* (Paco and Francesca)
*Renzija* for the program "Storie vere" (True Stories)

For the Audiovisual Archive of the Worker Movement he made the following videos:

1993 *1943- La scelta* (1943 - The Choice)
1994 *43-45 Pace e libertà* (43-45 Peace and Liberty)

Several of his works were presented at International Festivals:

1987 *Ripresi* (Taken Again)
*Fratelli minori* (Younger Brothers)
1990 *Alla Fiat era così* (That’s How it Was at FIAT)

- Directs his first feature film *“La seconda volta”*. The film is inspired by a
  story of terrorism and is produced by Nanni Moretti’s Sacher Film. The film is
  chosen for the Cannes Film Festival and wins many prizes, such as:
  - Chicago International Film Festival for the best first film;
  - Ciak d’oro for best first film.

1997 Moves to Rome where he currently lives and works.

1998 Directs his second film, *“La parola amore esiste”* (The Word Love Does Exist),
in which he plays the role of the psychoanalyst. The film opens the “Quinzaine
des Réalisateurs” at the Cannes Film Festival.
1999  Wins the SILVER RIBBON for best original subject for the film “La parola amore esiste” (The Word Love Does Exist).


1999  Directs his third film, “Preferisco il rumore del mare” (I Prefer the Sound of the Sea), in which he plays the role of the priest, Don Lorenzo. The film is presented in the "Un Certain Regard" section of the Cannes Film Festival in 2000.

1999  Served as a member of the jury at the Cannes Film Festival and at the Venice Film Festival.

2001  In Francesca Comencini’s film “Le parole di mio padre” (My Father’s Words), he plays the role of Mr. Malfenti.


2003  Directs Euripides’ “Cyclops” for the theater, in an adaptation by Enzo Siciliano

He produces the film “È’ più facile per un cammello…” (It Is Easier For a Camel…) by Valeria Bruni Tedeschi

2004  Produces and directs the documentary “L’ora della lucertola” (The Hour of the Lizard)

Directs the short feature “Una bellissima bambina” (A Beautiful Little Girl)

2005  Directs the documentary “Volevo solo vivere” (I Just Wanted to Live) with the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, Rai Cinema, Ventura Film with RTSI-Televisione Svizzera, produced by Gage Produzioni and Wildside Media

2005  Directs the documentary “Come si fa a non amare Pier Paolo Pasolini: appunti per un romanzo sull'immondezza”, (How you can not love Pier Paolo Pasolini: Notes for a Novel About Trash) co-produced by Wildside Media, AMA and in collaboration with the Audiovisual Archive of the Worker and Democratic Movement.
Variety @ The Cannes Film Festival

*(Internet Published News Article)*

**I Only Wanted to Live**

A Steven Spielberg and the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education presentation of a Gage Produzioni (Italy)/Wildside Media (Switzerland)/Rai Cinema (Italy)/ventura film, RTSI-Swiss Television (Switzerland) production. Produced by Mimmo Calopresti, Laurence Hoffmann, Mark Edwards. Executive producer, Spielberg. Directed by Mimmo Calopresti.

With: Andra Bucci, Esterina Calo Di Veroli, Nedo Fiano, Luciana Nissim Momigliano, Liliana Segre, Settimia Spizzichino, Giuliana Tedeschi, Shlomo Venezia, Arminio Wachsberger.

*(Italian dialogue)*

May 23, 2006

Jay Weissberg

No matter how many Holocaust docus get made, there will always be a need for the individual, heartbreaking stories of the survivors, as evidenced by "I Only Wanted to Live." Editing down hundreds of hours of testimony collected by Steven Spielberg's USC Shoah Foundation, helmer Mimmo Calopresti ("Happiness Costs Nothing") crafts a simple, straightforward and devastating portrait of nine Italian Jews deported to Auschwitz, each recounting wrenching memories with searing clarity. Certainly a must for schools and Jewish fests, docu could reach broader auds through PBS and cable.

In 2004 Calopresti helmed "Where Is Auschwitz?", a one hour docu about a group of Roman students on a school trip to the infamous death camp. Where that pic repped a basic outline of events, a sort of "Holocaust 101," current work relies on the testimony of survivors, interspersed with archival footage, to bring home the unfathomable human toll far more effectively.

Docu briefly mentions the hardships endured by Jewish families after the promulgation of Mussolini's infamous racial laws in 1938, quickly moving on to the Nazi invasion and the sweeping deportations that followed in 1943. The accounts that follow are told with a chilling intensity of detail, and while some elements may overlap with stories described in other docus, each one remains a unique and necessary testimony to genocide.

Among the group is Liliana Segre, 13 when she and her father tried escaping over the Swiss border before being turned back by a callous guard and then rounded up for deportation. Shlomo Venezia talks about forced work at the crematoriums, where he had to separate and shave the bodies after the gas showers. Settimia Spizzichino, with remarkable directness, discusses the tortures she endured as a guinea pig under Josef Mengele's barbarous experiments. Arminio Wachsberger recalls Mengele's cold explanation for why his wife and daughter were murdered.
"We'll always be there, at Auschwitz," says Nedo Fiano, the lone member of his family to make it out of the camps. Interviewees display photos of their murdered relatives, speaking of forced separations, intense hunger, and the stupefaction accompanying liberation. Calopresti understands the need for visual reminders, including appropriately horrific still and moving images of the camps with a judicious but unblinking approach.

Changing the English-language title would prevent docu from sounding too much like a Susan Hayward meller. Subtitles need some improvement, especially when untranslated text appears while voices are heard.

Camera (color/B&W); editors, Massimo Fiocchi, Valerio Quintarelli; music, Federico Badaloni, Rachel's; sound editor (Dolby), Gianluca Carbonelli; associate producer, Francesca Alatri; archival research, Laurence Hoffmann, Marie-Helene Barberis. Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (non-competing), May 22, 2006. Running time: 78 MIN.
Volevo Solo Vivere

Mimmo Calopresti’s homage to the almost 6,000 Italian Jews who died in Hitler’s death camps, and the 837 who returned alive, Volevo Solo Vivere spins a moving story out of sensitively sifted and edited archive material.

Cannes, May 20, 2006

Dir: Mimmo Calopresti. It. 2006. 82mins.

The archives used are those of the Shoah Foundation’s Institute For Visual History And Education, which has a mandate to capture on film as many testimonies of worldwide Holocaust survivors as possible. Calopresti and his team selected nine Italian survivor stories from this huge fund of material and interspersed them with historical footage and photos of the camps, the crematorium chimneys, the train convoys and the interviewees’ families in happier days.

What might have been a ploddingly worthy operation is made fresh by the detail of these stories and the chilling counterpoint of the interleaved images. The film was given a short and ultra-limited Italian theatrical run in January – when it took around $25,000 - but this was never intended as a commercial operation. Television exposure looks to be its best chance of reaching the wider audience it deserves. At Cannes it played out of competition.

The documentary begins by reminding us that, until Mussolini’s 1938 Race Laws (a sop to his friend Hitler), Italian Jews were seamlessly integrated into society. One interviewee recalls that most of her classmates only realised she was Jewish on the day she was banned from attending school. For five years the persecution was more bureaucratic than physical; but after Mussolini’s downfall in July 1943 the Germans occupied Italy, and on 16 October 1943 the first deportations began.

On-screen captions provide the key historical information, while the interviews fill in the human elements. Nedo Fiano, who was 18 when he was taken to Auschwitz, remembers his last embrace with his mother, before they were separated at the camp: she was crying so much that “it was as if she’d just come out of the shower”, and his face slipped on hers when they kissed.

Other details are almost unbearably harrowing, as when Shlomo Venezia describes his job, which was to untangle the corpses in the gas chambers and load them into the cremation furnaces. Another survivor remembers watching entire French primary school classes filing into the death chambers, dolls and teddy bears tucked under their arms.
What comes across most strongly is the dignity and composure of these survivors, and their compulsion to testify. They rarely break down, even when relating the worst horrors. But we see that *Volevo Solo Vivere* (translation: *I Only Wanted To Live*) works to redress our modern Holocaust-insulation, our feeling that we know all about the subject, by filling in the day-to-day facts. Archive footage provides the visual back-up. Here, too, it’s not always the most violent images that are the most telling.

One of the strongest sequences consists of a series of still photos of spectacles, of hairbrushes, of shoes, removed from those who have no more need for them and sorted into neat piles: obsessive order in the midst of unthinkable horror.

**Production company**
Calo

**Italian distribution**
01 Distribution

**International sales**
TBA

**Executive producer**
Steven Spielberg

**Producers**
Laurence Hoffman
Mark Edwards

**Co-producers**
Elda Guidinetti
Andres Pfaffli
Luisella Realini

**Editors**
Massimo Fiocchi
Valerio Quintarelli

**Music**
Federico Badaloni
ROME – “You can walk out of Auschwitz, but you leave your soul behind.” Mimmo Calopresti’s film “I Only Wanted to Live,” featuring the testimonies of nine Italian citizens who survived the Holocaust, ends with these words. Nine life stories with memories of pain that emerges in different ways: during a break, in a look that drifts away, during a prolonged silence. “We have read a lot, we have seen many photographs, we think we know everything about the Holocaust, but instead there’s always something new to discover, elements that add horror to horror,” says Walter Veltroni, who attended the premiere along with the director; Shlomo Venezia, one of the witnesses; and Giancarlo Leone from Rai Cinema, the film’s co-producer. “I Only Wanted to Live” will be distributed by 01 in major Italian cities beginning on the 27th. It will come out on DVD and will then be broadcasted on television. Calopresti’s first trip to Auschwitz was with students from Rome and survivors. “It was shocking to see the same reality through different eyes —through the survivors’, for whom memories resurfaced, and through the students’, who were simply unaware. It was an experience that changed me. Then, for two years, I listened to hundreds of testimonies. Two years of a modest amount of work, necessary for filmmakers and for he who tends to presume to know everything. I began to believe the unbelievable because it’s unbelievable what happened in their lives.”

The number of victims flashes by in the film “because the Shoah is a problem of dead people, millions of dead people, but I focused on the stories, I wanted to place the life stories in the center of all of the attention. What struck me in these stories was the unconceivable, such as when Venezia, one of the prisoners in charge of the cremation of the bodies, called a “Sonderkommando,” recalls how the prisoners were tricked into going into the gas chamber. They had them undress, they told them to remember the number of the bench on which they left their clothing so they could go back for them later. And then when he saw his cousin in line on his way towards his death, he brought him a piece of bread and a can of meat.”

Sometimes, says Calopresti, “I censored myself. I left the images of the corpses being tossed one by one into the ditches, but I never showed the big tractors dumping piles of them in. I needed to distance myself from the horror, but I must say something: Horror is the daily work, organized with monstrous precision, of a factory of sorts that had to meet preset goals in order to prove the guarantee that they could kill 8,000 people per day.”

(more)
Small details in the film are striking such as Liliana Segre, who will never forget her father’s delicate wrists in handcuffs before he disappeared forever on the truck that took him to his death, Esterina Calo’ Di Veroli’s anguish at seeing her own body ravaged by Dr. Mengele’s experiments. Somebody mentioned being reported by an acquaintance or a neighbor, but, according to Calopresti, “the initial footage of Mussolini’s speech in Trieste on September 18, 1938, in which he deems ‘world Jewry the irreconcilable enemy of fascism’ is essential in order to define the historical context. And below him there’s a huge crowd of people cheering. Large crowds of people cheering scare me now. As a human being, I don’t know if it’s possible that all this will never happen again. Or that it is not happening. I’m not sure that there aren’t human beings today who are subjected to the same abuses at the hands of other human beings. I can’t do much as an individual. I can only try to become stronger, to improve myself while hoping that others faced with certain memories do the same.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS: SPIELBERG
He initiated the collection of the 52,000 interviews for the Shoah Foundation

PHOTO CAPTIONS: CALOPRESTI
The director filmed “I Only Wanted to Live,” testimonies of Italian survivors

PHOTO CAPTION: THE WOMEN (L)
The Stories; Andra Bucci, deported at age 4 and liberated at age 6; Esterina Calo’ Di Veroli, Roman like Settimia Spizzichino, who was the only female survivor of the 600 women deported on October 16, 1943, met up with each other again during the “death march” to Bergen Belsen; Luciana Momigliano Nissim, a friend of Primo Levi’s, worked as a doctor in the infirmary at Auschwitz; Liliana Segre, born in Milan, deported with her father at age 13 in ’38 despite having been baptized; Giuliana Tedeschi, deported with her husband after hiding her daughters in a convent, witness during several war crimes trials.

PHOTO CAPTION: THE MEN (R)
The Stories; Nedo Fiano, arrested by Italians on February 6, 1944, incarcerated in Florence, and transferred to Auschwitz with his family, of which he is the sole survivor; Shlomo (sic) Venezia, born in Salonica, arrested in Athens, he worked in the crematoria

and was destined for certain death because the Nazis didn’t want there to be any remaining witnesses. He survived the death marches. Arminio Wachsberger (sic), born in Fiume, deported from Rome in ’43, he watched his wife and 5-year-old daughter go off to their death and managed to survive, thanks to his knowledge of several languages. He was subjected to Dr. Mengele’s experiments.

*(more)*
ROME – Steven Spielberg’s initial goal when he established “Survivors of the Shoah Visual History” in 1994 was to gather at least 50,000 testimonies of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses before it was too late. “The project was a success. We videotaped 52,000 testimonies in 56 countries and in 32 languages. There are also the stories of the Sinti and Roma, political prisoners, liberators and war crimes trials participants,” says Mark Edwards, who in Spielberg’s name thanks Mayor Veltroni, the Foundation’s Italian branch, and especially Calopresti “for the sensitivity with which he made the film. It is a film of intense content that is shown with taste and simplicity. He communicates his reactions which could be the reactions of any one of us.”

The archive of videotapes is available to every country, to whoever wishes to make a specific documentary or film. Four hundred interviews were collected in Italy from 1998 to 1999, and were selected by Calopresti for the film. The collection is available to the public at the State Archive. The Shoah Foundation, which as of this year has become a part of the University of Southern California’s (USC) College of Letters, Arts & Sciences, has produced 11 documentaries that have been broadcast in 50 countries and subtitled in 28 languages, including Broken Silence, a collection of five films by filmmakers such as Puenzo for Argentina, Chukhraj for Russia, and Wajda for Poland. The 16 educational products are also extremely important to Spielberg and include interactive online exhibits available for free via the Shoah Foundation’s website. On January 27, the Day of Memory, meetings and events dedicated to the Shoah are scheduled to take place around the world. “I Only Wanted to Live” will be shown in Rome on that day to the 1500 students at the high schools participating in the City of Rome’s project “We Remember,” which in four years of existence has partnered with 51 high schools and 32 junior high schools.(m.p.f.)
Il regista presenta il suo “Volevo solo vivere”, che raccoglie le testimonianze di nove italiani sopravvissuti all'Olocausto e la MEMORIA.

le storie

LUNEDÌ
André Blu, actrice, a Firenze e Abbeville; Seppia, bergamasca, contatti con gli ebrei di Roma; Maria, visitatore del campo di Auschwitz; Laura, viaggiatrice; Luciana, compagna; Alka, unica di 14 anni, rapita come modo di vendicazione nel maggio di Auschwitz; Lucia, unica di 14 anni, rapita come modo di vendicazione nel maggio di Auschwitz; Giordano, giornalista; deposto alla fine del documentario, racconta la storia di uno di bambini nascosti in un cunicolo sotto il piano di un edificio, salvati grazie all'aiuto del generale per l'ordine e la pace Francesco Giordano.

le storie
Calopresti e l’orrore di Auschwitz

IMMAGINI FOTOGRAFICHE

ROMA — "Da Auschwitz si esce con il corpo, alla Shoah si abbia amoroso fiorìtura". Con queste parole, il critico di cinema Emilio De Simone conclude "Volgere a Volvere
e Tommaso Tommaso"

La Shoah è un evento che ha toccato profondamente tutte le persone, e la sua memoria è unica. La Shoah Foundation, creata da Steven Spielberg, ha infranto il silenzio con l'elaborazione dei documentari Cinquantamila voci dalla Shoah.

L’Archivio di Stato, a disposizione del pubblico, la Shoah Foundation, che ha organizzato i film documentari, è in grado di utilizzare la tecnologia per far conoscere la Shoah. Il progetto "Cinquantamila voci dalla Shoah" è stato realizzato con l’aiuto di esperti in diversi campi, tra cui artisti, storici e giornalisti.

Il progetto "Cinquantamila voci dalla Shoah" è stato realizzato con l’aiuto di esperti in diversi campi, tra cui artisti, storici e giornalisti. Il film documentario è stato realizzato con l’aiuto di Steven Spielberg e della Shoah Foundation. Il progetto "Cinquantamila voci dalla Shoah" è stato realizzato con l’aiuto di esperti in diversi campi, tra cui artisti, storici e giornalisti.
The film on the Holocaust will be in theaters on January 27

“I Only Wanted to Live”
Calopresti Recounts the Banality and Randomness of Evil

January 25, 2006 by Boris Sollazzo
Translated by Jana Gustman

I Only Wanted to Live is the title of Mimmo Calopresti’s documentary devoted to the Shoah following his itinerant and heavy Excuse Me, Where is Auschwitz. The film is an imprecation, a wish, a silent cry of suffering. It’s a cultural project backed by Steven Spielberg through the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, which collected the 400 interviews that one of the peninsula’s best documentarians and directors spent two years sifting through. Nine moving stories emerge that can also draw a smile—such as the love story that manages to come to life during the horrific train ride but dies before it begins upon arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

“My work is often presumptuous,” a worn-out Calopresti says. “It’s about me doing the storytelling or letting others do it. This time I decided to just listen, to have the strength to not walk away when hearing certain stories became too difficult.” An emotional Walter Veltroni, who, with City Councillor for Education Maria Coscia, worked actively on remembrance initiatives, including “We Remember,” states: “In a bulimic and fragile society such as ours, anything that preserves memory is marvelous. I’m not exaggerating when I say that it’s important work for both history and humanity.” This is the strength of the Calabrian director: to be an observer rather than a narrator. The intelligent, simple choice to show the drama from a predominantly female perspective is admirable. Andra Bucci, Esterina Di Veroli, Luciana Momigliano, Liliana Segre, Settimia Spizzichino, Giuliana Tedeschi look like grandmothers: tough, sweet, simple, stern, strong-willed.

“I had specific plans for the editing process,” Calopresti adds. “But choosing the stories and the people came naturally. I stopped myself whenever it felt like I should. Women naturally know how to be more vivid, more direct.” They are the ones who recount the banality and randomness of evil. They move us but their honesty also elicits anger. How the women define themselves renders us speechless, not the cruel details. One defines herself as a bad person “because I was with the elderly instead of people my own age. The old people never wanted to eat, and they gave me their food because they saw how hungry I was.” Another calls herself stupid because “I don’t remember the names of those who were in the camp.” These definitions reflect the unfairness that they feel guilty while, at the same time, are victims of an inexplicable atrocity. The men are articulate and harsh. We hear from Shlomo Venezia, who was in charge of the ovens; Arminio Wachsberger, who was the interpreter for cruel Mengele; the ever-articulate
Nedo Fiano, who says, “I walked out of Auschwitz but I left behind my heart and soul. That experience made me a witness for the rest of my life.”

Choosing distribution was a laudable decision. The company will show the film in theaters beginning on January 27, the Day of Memory and the 61st anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. “It will definitely be shown at the Metropolitan in Rome and the Anteo in Milan and hopefully in the rest of the major cities. We are asking theater owners to be sensitive,” reports Giancarlo Leone, the managing director. So it will only be shown for sure in two theaters. Way too few. “When we tried to get funding to make this documentary,” the director says, “we understood just how difficult it is to talk about certain subjects. That’s why I’m so grateful to those who are so committed to ensuring that the film is seen.” The materialistic, Marxist director turns existential when he says, “I realized that politics is not the answer. I don’t mean in an ethical sense but in the higher sense of the word.” A hardly novel question to ponder is: After Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, and Dachau, how could Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib exist? “Precisely my point.” Calopresti replies. “By being exposed to these experiences and testimonies, people as individuals must grow and better themselves. The documentary starts with a crowd applauding Mussolini’s proclamation of the racial laws. Crowds scare me. We must try to understand the difficulty of not becoming an active participant in the daily horror of the industrialized killing system, which was contractually bound to carry out a minimum of 8,000 deaths per day. Why did people make certain choices even when they weren’t “obligatory”? The only path we, as individuals, must take is one of courage, conscience, and awareness.” History, therefore, doesn’t teach us anything. To which the director, with a bitter smile lining his lips, replies, “Perhaps not.”

Pull quote:
A cultural project backed by executive producer Steven Spielberg through the USC Shoah Foundation, which made more than 400 interviews with Nazi camp survivors available to the Italian director.

from pg. 9
Il film sull'Olocausto sarà nelle sale il 27 gennaio

"Volevo solo vivere". 
Calopresti racconta la banalità e la casualità del male

di Boris Solazzo


"Volevo un progetto preciso di montaggio - continua Calopresti, ma la scelta delle storie e dei personaggi è venuta naturalmente. Mi sono sentito di doverlo fare. Inevitabilmente le due sono state più efficaci, dirette. Sono loro a raccontare la banalità e la casualità del male. Continuano, ma nella loro onestà sussultano anche rabbia, reazione. Non sono i dettagli più o meno crudeli che fanno mancare il fiato. Ma le definizioni che danno di se stesse. Chi si definisce cattivo "perché siamo con i più anziani e non con i miei coetanei. I vecchi non avevano mai voglia di mangiare e cedevano a me i loro pasti perché mi vedevano affamata. Chi stupida, perché non ricordò i nomi di quelli che stavano nel campo. L'iniquità di sentirsi colpevoli, pur essendo vittime di un'arbitrici inspiegabile. A loro si unisce la lusinga e la durezza degli uomini, Silvio Venezia, addetto ai fornì. Armario Wechselberger, fumano, interprete del ferro. Mengle, Nedo Blanso, oratore efficace che dice "da Auschwitz sono andato via con le tarme, ma non con il cuore. Un'anima. Quell'esperienza mi ha reso un testimone per tutta la vita."

“I Only Wanted to Live”
Calopresti’s painful film recounts the Shoah through the eyes of nine survivors

Milan, January 27, 2006

Mimmo Calopresti’s documentary on Italian Jewish Holocaust survivors avoids becoming one of the many rhetorical exercises unable to staunch anti-Semitism imposed by the Day of Memory, and provides us instead with a small portrait of truth and balance. “I Only Wanted to Live,” produced by Steven Spielberg for the Shoah Foundation and by Rai Cinema, chronicles the years spanning from the racial laws to the opening of the Nazi camps in 1945 through the faces, voice and memories of nine witnesses. The documentary opens with a Luce* film clip of Il Duce addressing the crowd in 1938 from the balcony of Palazzo Venezia (Venezia Palace): “For 16 years, world Jewry has been an irreconcilable enemy of the party.” Then photographs flash on screen of two soldiers from World War I, and an off-screen voice says: “These are my mother’s brothers, who also died in Auschwitz.” It’s a woman, Settimia Spizzichino, with short hair, glasses, and her right armpit raised, who is speaking in Roman dialect. She remembers her sister, Giuditta, as “the youngest, she wanted to be in charge.” She tells the story of how Giuditta panicked and got herself captured by the Germans on October 16, 1943, and ultimately got the whole family arrested while they were hiding in the end room of their home located in the ghetto. They had left the doors to all the other rooms open to make it seem like the house was empty. Next we see another photograph of a man with a baby in his arms. An attractive middle class Milanese woman says that it is her father, who was widowed at 31 and was both a mother and a father to her. Liliana Segre was 13 years old when she ended up in Auschwitz after a failed escape attempt. “We were so unfit to climb a mountain at night. We were just a bourgeois family, but we made it.” She talks about the Swiss officer who stopped them: “When I understood that he was going to reject us, I flung myself onto the ground. I begged him. I remember how pitiful I was, but he had no mercy, and we decided to go back.” She describes the people crammed into the train, the crying, the praying, and then the silence.

Luciana Momigliano, who is now an energetic 80-year-old, was also on that train. For her, it was a trip full of sweet nothings with her sweetheart: “We weren’t shameless enough to make love in the middle of all those people, but for me, it was a trip towards life, not death. He died; she survived working in the infirmary. “Chug, chug, chug. Shifts for resting, standing up for two or three hours, and then you could sit back down. No food, no water, a curtain in a corner to cover a bucket.” This is the Florentine, Nedo Fiano, speaking, who was 18 in 1944. A photograph shows him as a five-year-old child in an overcoat, shorts, and holding a cigarette in his fingers as a joke. In Auschwitz, he had to clean out the train cars. Another woman, Giuliana Tedeschi, describes the selection process in which her husband disappeared, while Settimia recalls how she survived by Mengele walking by and choosing her to be a guinea pig for his anti-scabies experiments.
Arminio Wachsberger, from Fiume, whose five-year-old daughter was ill, became Mengele’s interpreter. “Where’s my family?” he asked after a few days. “What, you don’t know?” “My wife could’ve worked too.” “A mother who has seen her daughter die can’t work.” “But what did my daughter do?” “She was Jewish.” Approximately 230,000 children died in Auschwitz. Today, Esterina Calo’ looks matronly but she was a teenager back then. “We were stark naked as the soldiers walked by, but they didn’t even look at us. One guy shaved you, the other tattooed you. I was very clever; I immediately learned all the words I needed to know in that inferno.”

Clogs under our heads

Through gestures and daily suffering, history becomes memory. Those who remember tell us about life in the camp; being surrounded by the sickly-sweet smell of burned flesh and black dust; being packed like sardines inside the barracks and not understanding anything in that Babel of languages. They tell us how they slept with their clogs under their heads to keep the other prisoners from stealing them; how they woke up to clubbings; how they washed with freezing cold water without toilet paper in order to get rid of the sores caused by diarrhea; how the very white snow became yellow after 15 minutes because everybody had dysentery. They talk about appeasing their hunger by dreaming of pasta or discussing recipes, which “sometimes satiated us. Just by talking about food made it seem like it was still in our mouth.” They explain how ten of them sat in a circle and passed the same cup of swill around until someone’s runny nose disgusted them and they decided to trade some bread for a spoon.” They describe how people died after gobbling one last mouthful like the one offered by Shlomo Venezia, who worked in the Sonderkommando, to his cousin Leone before he went into the showers and died in the ovens. A painful film in which nothing is morbid, everything is necessary, and horror seeks redemption in poetry. (m.v.)

*Translator’s note: The Luce Institute in Rome is a source for archival footage as well as a producer and distributor of documentary films.*

from pg. 6
“Volevo solo vivere”

La pellicola dolente di Calopresti racconta la Shoah attraverso gli occhi di nove sopravvissuti

Poteva essere l'ennesimo esercizio di retorica imposto dal Giorno della Memoria, un'inesorabile crescita del Nazismo e i suoi esiti, è un piccolo esempio di verità e misura il documentario di Mimmo Calopresti sugli ebrei italiani scampati all'Olocausto. “Volevo solo vivere”, prodotto da Steven Spielberg per la Shoah Foundation e dal Rosa cinema attraverso i volti, le voci, i ricordi di nove testimoni la racconta gli anni che vanno dalle leggi razziali all'apertura dei lager nazisti nel 1943. Si apre col Duce che in un filmato Lucio Martelli teatro le feste nel 1937 dal balcone di Palazzo Venezia: “L'ebraismo mondiale da 18 anni è un nemico irreconciliabile del partito”. Poi sorgeranno alcune foto, due soldati della Prima guerra mondiale in uniforme, e una voce fuori campo: “Sei i fratelli di mia madre, morti anche loro ad Auschwitz”. Capelli corti, occhiali, l'acqua è sollevata, è una donna a parlare in romanesco. Sembra una scena di una casa milanese, che è il luogo della memoria. La storia di Vincenzo Nardone, che è il testimone giusto per raccontare la Shoah attraverso gli occhi di nove sopravvissuti.

I glicociti sotto la testa

La storia entra così nella memoria attraverso gesti e misteri quotidiani. Chi li ricorda, chi li ricorda la vita nel lager tra il dolore del cibo bruciato, la neve sull'aria, le baracche, le stelle nelle luci della luna, le cicatrici sulla pelle, le parole che rimangono nelle vene. La Shoah, le lacrime di Melech, le sabbie della Ghetton. Raccontano come si mangiava in “pierdii attaccati al mondo all'altezza della testa, se non si aveva la forza di farlo, si moriva. Le parole che rimangono nella memoria, la luce che si spegne nel buio, la morte che rimane nella vita. E' così che la Shoah rimane nella memoria, come un'eco che non si spegne mai.
Simply harrowing. “You can walk out of Auschwitz, but you leave behind your heart. We’ll always be there.” He whispers it in a voice that is slightly tinged with emotion. Nedo Fiano, Florentine but Milanese by adoption, was 18 when he was deported to the Nazi camp with his family. Everybody was killed except him, prisoner number A 5405. He spoke German well, the language of the torturers, and that “gift” saved his life. Fiano is one of nine Jewish survivors, two of whom have since died. Their wrenching testimonies give life to I Only Wanted to Live, a documentary made by Mimmo Calopresti on behalf of the Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education. In other words, for Spielberg. Seventy five clear, intense minutes without a trace of rhetoric but with touches of heartfelt tenderness. Because of the pain, the discomfort, and the shame, nobody applauded yesterday morning at the end of the press screening, and rightly so.

Mixing images from roughly ten archives, black and white photographs, and color interviews, the director of The Second Time strictly adheres to the didactic/pedagogical purpose so dear to the maker of Schindler’s List. It wasn’t easy to choose the stories. For two years, Calopresti watched the more than 400 Italian-language interviews, collected between 1998 and 1999 by the Shoah Foundation Institute’s researchers, to choose the stories of the four men and five women. The director explains: “Sometimes in my films, I presumptuously do the storytelling. This time, I only had to listen and do a small piece of the work. I think it was a very useful experience for me.” In reality, the editing of the material and deciding how much and which music to use makes I Only Wanted to Live a more touching and personal documentary than Calopresti would lead you to believe. Rai Cinema, the co-producer, is doing the right thing by releasing the film in theaters on Friday. To start, there will be five copies in the major cities (documentaries, unless they are political satires à la Michael Moore or Sabina Guzzanti, are not a very popular genre). The film’s opening is symbolically important as it will be on the morning of the 27th, the Day of Memory. Fifteen hundred students from schools in Rome will see it in the Auditorium as a part of the “We Remember” project.

This is why Walter Veltroni was also at the Casa del cinema theater. “In a bulimic and fragile society such as ours, anything related to remembrance is wonderful,” said the mayor, emphasizing the value of the testimonies. “Let’s be honest: We’ve only just begun to talk about the Shoah again. For many survivors, it has been difficult to remember. But once they start, they can’t stop.” This is the case of Shlomo Venezia, born in Salonica in 1923. Arrested in ’44 and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, he was forced to “work” in the Sonderkommando, the group of prisoners in charge of cremating the bodies. He saw thousands of people go into the fake showers and thousands packed into ovens in groups of two – one on top of the other – on their way to becoming ashes. In the early ’90s, when he found the strength to remember, they thought he was crazy. Yesterday he said, “I can tell the deniers, step by step, how those people died in the gas chambers.”
Calopresti racconta la Shoah per Spielberg

In «Volevo solo vivere» nuove testimonianze di uomini e donne scampati allo sterminio

Michele Anselmi
da Roma


Mischia immagini provenienti da una decina di archivi, fotografie in bianco e nero e interviste a colori, il ri- gistro di La seconda volta sì, messo rigorosamente al servizio dell’intento di didattico-pedagogico caro all’autore di Schindler’s List. Non è stato facile sce- gliere le storie. Per due anni Calopresti ha visionato le interviste in lingua italiana, oltre quattrocento, raccolte tra il 1998 e il 1999 dai ricercatori dello Shoah foundation institute, per arrivare alla seme- lane nove, appunti quattro uomini e cinque donne scampati allo sterminio.

Spiega il regista: «Nel mio film, qual- che volta, racconto presuntuosamente me stesso. Stavo ho solo dovuto ascoltare, facendo un lavoro modesto, e credo mi sia stato utile. In realtà il montaggio del materiale, il desegno delle scene, la selezione dei brani, sono dati di Volevo solo vivere un docu- mentario più toccante e personale di quanto Calopresti voglia far intendere. Bene fa la Rai Cinema, che coproduce, a distribuirlo nelle sale dei venti. Per- partire, cinque copie nelle città principali (il documentario, se non sappiamo se politico alla maniera di Michael Moore e Sabina Guzzanti, è un genere che tira poco), ma con un prologo simbolicamente importante: proprio il 27 motti- no, in occasione della Giornata della Memoria, 1500 studenti delle scuole ro- mane lo vedranno all’Auditorium nel quadruplo del progetto «Nei ricordiamo». Per questo c’era anche Walter Vel- treni alla Casa del cinema, «in una civi- tà bullimica e facile come la nostra, tut- to ciò che trasferisce memoria è una meraviglia», ha scandito il sindaco, sottolineando il valore di quelle testimonianze. «Diciamo la verità: non è da tanto che s’è ricordato a parlare di Shoah. Per molti sopravvissuti è stato difficile ricordare. E poi il mondo non si ferma, non si finisce». Il caso di Shilo- mo Venezia, ucciso 1923, da Salerno. Arrestato nel 44 e deportato ad Au- schwitz-Birkenau, è obbligato a lavoro, in genere al campo di prigionieri addetto alla cremazione dei corpi. Dietro giustizia ne ha visto avversi- verso le file, avversi, per la giustizia, per gli ebrei. In quel campo si è trovato di fronte a una realtà. La verità non si ferma, non si finisce. E il caso di Shilo- mo Venezia, ucciso 1923, da Salerno. Arrestato nel 44 e deportato ad Au- schwitz-Birkenau, è obbligato a lavoro, in genere al campo di prigionieri addetto alla cremazione dei corpi. Dietro giustizia ne ha visto avversi- verso le file, avversi, per la giustizia, per gli ebrei. In quel campo si è trovato di fronte a una realtà. La verità non si ferma, non si finisce.
A long trip with no return
Nine testimonies regarding the deportations and Nazi death camps: harrowing stories gathered by Calopresti in the documentary film “I Only Wanted to Live”

Rome, January 25, 2006
by Roberta Bottari

ROME – “Nobody ever returned from Auschwitz. The few of us who survived walked out of that concentration camp, but our souls are still there.” That is from Nedo Fiano’s clearly articulated testimony. He was 18 when, on May 16, 1944, he was deported from Florence to Auschwitz with his entire family, of which he is the sole survivor. He and eight other people who returned alive from the Nazi death camps gave their testimonies to Mimmo Calopresti for his moving documentary on the Holocaust, I Only Wanted to Live, which was produced in association with the City of Rome for Steven Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation. The film, presented yesterday by the director and Rome Mayor Walter Veltroni, is in theaters in Rome, Milan, Turin, Florence, and Naples, thanks to 01.

Segments of the nine Italian deportees describing their long trip towards death are interspersed with the film’s chilling archival footage. They talk about their arrival at the camp, crazy with thirst and consumed by hunger, about their desperate attempt to not believe what they were seeing, about the sickly sweet smell of burned human flesh that came from the ovens of the crematoria. “I was forced to put the corpses in the oven, but I had to be very careful. The oven was very, very hot, and if I didn’t remove the stretcher after a few seconds, the body would stick to it and would nearly melt.” This is the difficult story of Shlomo Venezia, from Salonica, who was deported to Auschwitz at 21. Yesterday morning, he got emotional while watching the film. “I don’t feel like talking,” he said. “But I know I have to. When I returned, the few times that I alluded to what happened in the camps, they thought I was crazy; they didn’t believe me. For 47 years, I didn’t say another word, but that was a mistake. The people must know what happened. This is why I talk and I accompany students to the camps.”

Liliana Segre, Milanese, arrived at Auschwitz in ’43, after a desperate and futile attempt to escape to Switzerland with her father. She was 13 years old. “I divide that period of my life into three stages. The first is the stage of crying. When they took us away, everybody was crying. It was the end of all hope, and we knew it. The second is the stage of faith: the luckiest ones prayed, even for those of us who weren’t Orthodox. The third and most painful is the one of silence. When you get so close to a point of no return, words are useless.”

Produced by the director with Rai Cinema and Swiss TV, I Only Wanted to Live, will be shown (more)
in schools and will premiere tomorrow at the Parco della Musica. “I will fight,” says Veltroni, “for this documentary to be in every school. In a bulimic and fragile society such as ours, remembrance is a necessity. As well, in such a media-driven age, the memories of the people who were there are invaluable. It was about time that this happened. It’s only been a short time since we’ve begun to talk about the Shoah again.”

“It was a difficult experience,” admits Mimmo Calopresti. But the images of his film speak louder than his words, such as when Nedo Fiano appears on screen and says, “The gas in the gas chambers rose from the bottom, so the people fought and hit each other, trying to step on one another in the desperate attempt to save themselves. Naturally, everybody died, but the bodies were so intertwined from that fight that it wasn’t easy to separate them.” They injected typhus and scabies into Rome’s Settimia Spizzichino as a medical experiment. Andra Bucci, who was born in Fiume, arrived at the concentration camp at the age of 4. “In order to send the children off to die,” she says, “the Germans said, ‘whoever wants to see their mommy should climb onto that truck.’ A kind soul had told my sister and me that if we wanted to save our lives we should say no, that we didn’t want to see our mother. We ran to explain this to our cousin Sergio. That morning, my sister and I stayed alive by lying and saying that we didn’t want to see our mother. Sergio, however, didn’t make it: ‘Do you want to see your mommy?’ the Germans asked him. He hesitated and then said a “yes” that came from the bottom of his soul. We never saw him again.”

Perhaps it is indeed true that one cannot completely leave Auschwitz, that the life experience stays in your heart as Liliana Segre concludes her story: “On liberation day, I saw one of my guards, an extremely ruthless man, as he was taking off his uniform in an attempt to pass as a civilian. His gun fell, and I thought, ‘now I’ll pick it up and I’ll kill him, I’ll finally take revenge.’ When I didn’t pick up that gun is the extraordinary instant that will always show the difference between me and them. I would never kill anyone for any reason whatsoever. Because mine is the ethic of life, not death.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS
From left to right: The director Mimmo Calopresti and, in the black and white photo, Andra Bucci with her cousin Sergio and younger sister. Below: A picture of Auschwitz.

RIGHT QUOTE
“They told us, ‘if you want to see your mommy again, get onto the truck.’”

LEFT QUOTE
“We few who survived left our souls behind.”
Nove testimonianze sulle deportazioni e i campi di sterminio nazisti: storie strazianti raccolte da Calopresti nel docu-film "Volevo solo vivere"

di ROMERTA BOTTACI


Un lungo viaggio senza ritorno

"Le conseguenze di Auschwitz" ha portato alla scelta di vivere ancora oggi, nel campo di sterminio, la memoria dei giorni di guerra.

La memoria è un viaggio senza ritorno, un viaggio che non conosce né fine, né inizio. È un viaggio che porta alla conoscenza di sé, alla comprensione del mondo e alla percezione della vita. È un viaggio che richiede tempo, energia e determinazione.

La storia di Auschwitz è un capitolo della storia dellaumanità. È un capitolo che non può essere dimenticato, perché rappresenta una lezione di etica, di morale e di umanità. È un capitolo che deve essere conosciuto, perché è una lezione di respiro e di attivazione.

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Shoah: “I Only Wanted to Live”

“I Only Wanted to Live,” a powerful documentary by Mimmo Calopresti, produced by Spielberg with the testimonies of nine Italian Jews who survived the horror of the Nazi camps, opens in theaters on the Day of Memory

January 25, 2006 by Gabriella Gallozzi

“I had very long black hair. The first thing they did to me after making me undress with the other women was shave my hair with the clippers, starting with the first lock from the center of my head. Right here, right at the hairline. Fifty years later, and I still get the chills just like I did when that lock slid down my bare back.” It seems incredible that out of the horror of Auschwitz this petite woman (Settimia Spizzichino), scarred by her suffering, carries around this memory despite having had her skin ravaged by Mengele’s atrocious experiments. But it is precisely this personal memory and those of the other Italian survivors of the Nazi camps collected by Steven Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation that give Mimmo Calopresti’s documentary *I Only Wanted to Live* its power. The film opens in our theaters on Friday, the Day of Memory, and will be distributed by Rai’s 01. It will also be in schools, on public television (it will be broadcasted next season) and DVD. In the meantime, it will premiere tomorrow evening at the Auditorium of Rome, the city that supported the film production and has been working for years to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive by means of its school project “We Remember” (there have already been numerous school trips to Auschwitz). The goal, explains Mayor Walter Veltroni, is to create “new witnesses” by listening to the stories of those who experienced the horror and are willing to talk about it.

Even talking about it isn’t easy, explains Shlomo Venezia, one of the witnesses, during a press conference. “I didn’t say a word for many years and then, one day, somebody asked me some questions and I tried to answer them. However, I realized that the person next to us made a gesture with his hand… as if to say that I was crazy. So, once again, I stopped talking. But I felt the need to start talking again when I saw swastikas reappearing on the streets in Rome. I understood then that we should never stop remembering.” This is also the goal of Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation. Mark Edwards, one of the Foundation’s managers, says, “We gathered nearly 50,000 interviews around the world of the survivors of the Nazi camps,” those of the Jews, but also of the Roma, political prisoners, homosexuals and the camp liberators. The Foundation is committed to producing documentaries in every country so that these testimonies “circulate” such as the case in Italy with *I Only Wanted to Live*, for which Mimmo Calopresti spent two years “immersed” in a flood of memories of nine Italian Auschwitz survivors.

*(more)*
Nine unique and personal stories, each one mesmerizing and violently moving, focus on human beings, not just numbers caught up in the drama of history. Therefore, the survivors' words have a greater impact than the archival footage: images that are, by now, sadly well known. For example, the words of Shlomo Venezia, who worked in the crematoria and recounts every small detail of the tragic ritual aimed at the systematic elimination of the prisoners: The undressing, the clothes neatly placed in the illusion that they could be put back on again after exiting the “showers,” the shoes lined up and tied together so as not to lose them (all of the “materials” were used again) and then the “gassed” and entangled bodies that were to be meticulously rearranged for placement on the stretchers that were slid into the ovens. And the day that Shlomo had to accompany a family member during this “ritual.” “I tried to comfort him,” he says, “and to give him something to eat. The hunger there was unbearable.” All of them talk a bit about the hunger that reduced their bodies to skeletons. Nedo Fiano, a Florentine who was 18 years old at the time, explains the “technique” for getting the most filling part of the soup. “We went to the end of the line,” he says, “because whoever was last had the ladle and could dunk it in deeper to fish out the most substantial parts from the bottom.”

Andra Bucci, a Florentine, arrived at Auschwitz when she was barely 4 with her mother, grandmother, sister and some cousins. Everybody died. She was saved, thanks to the “tip-off” from a Kapo, who warned the children to say no when the soldiers asked them if they wanted to see their mothers. Because of their “yes” her cousins were sent to Hamburg with other children and killed by the insane medical experiments. And then there’s the memory of liberation. Of the gate that was finally open. Of the Nazis taking off their uniforms in order to blend in with the escaping civilians. Another witness, Liliana Segre, talks about this, “In that moment, I saw the commandant next to me who, up until a second before, had the power to choose life or death for us. I saw him throw down his gun right at my feet. So I thought about picking it up and shooting him. I would’ve had every right in the world to do so… But I didn’t do it because the culture in which I grew up in and believe in is the culture of life, not death.” None of this should be forgotten.

PHOTO CAPTION
The death march from Mimmo Calopresti’s documentary “I Only Wanted to Live”

QUOTE
The memories speak for themselves: the shaving, the urgency to be heard because the swastikas are back, the choice to let the vanquished Nazi live
IN SCENA

CINEMA E STORIA Venerdì, nel Giorno della memoria, arriva nelle sale «Volevo solo vivere», è un potente documentario di Mimmo Calopresti prodotto da Spielberg con le testimonianze di ebrei, nove italiani sopravvissuti all'orrore del lager nazisti

di Gabriella Galeotti

Shoah: «Volevamo solo vivere»
nno, Sembra incredibile che dell'orrore di Au-
orschitz questa donna minore e smarrita dalla so-
frequenza (Settimia Spitzichino) abbia portato con
se questo ricordo, nonostante la sua carne sia sta-
ta massacrata dagli atroci esperimenti di Menge-
le. Ma è proprio il ricordo personale, il suo come
e quello di altri testimoni italiani sopravvissuti ai
lager nazisti e rinchiusi dalla Shoah Foundation di
Steven Spielberg, che fanno fara di Veloce
solo vivere, il documentario di Mimmo Calopre-
sci in uscita nelle nostre sale venerdì, nel Giorno
della memoria per la distribuzione di 01 della
Ra. È destinato poi anche alle scuole, alla tv
pubblica (marzo messo ora nella prossima sta-
gione) e all'usura in dvd. Intanto domani sera ci
sarà un'apertura all'Auditorium di Roma, città
che ha sostenuto la produzione del film e che da
anni, attraverso il progetto delle scuole «Noi ri-
cordiamo» (numerosi sono già stati i viaggi delle
scolaresche ad Auschwitz), è impegnata a tenere
viva la memoria dell'Olocausto. L'obiettivo,
spiega il sindaco Walter Veltroni, è quello di cre-
are «nuovi testimoni» attraverso l'ascolto dei
tracconti di chi l'orrore l'ha subito sulla propria
pelle e di condividere la raccolta.
Anche raccontare non è facile, spiega in confe-
renza stampa Shlomo Venezia, uno dei testimo-
ni: «Per tanti anni non ho cotto niente, poi un
giorno qualche rai ha fatto delle domande e ho
provato a rispondere. Mi sono accorto però che
chi ci stava ascoltando non ha fatto con la mano quel
gesto...cosa per dire che era mattato. Allora ho
smesso di nuovo di raccontare. Ma ho sentito il
bisogno di ricominciare quando ho visto riparta-
ter per la scaduta di Roma le sfacciate. Ho capito
allora che non si deve mai smettere di ricordare». 
E questo è anche l'obiettivo della Shoah
Foundation di Spielberg. Dice uno dei suoi responsabili:
Mark Edwards: «Abbiamo raccolto in tutto il
mondo circa 550 interviste ai sopravvissuti ai
lager nazisti e hasi anche a Roma, dottori di
politi, omoni, iscritti e al liberatori dei campi
di sterminio. La Fondazione si impegna poi, in
ogni paese a produrre documentari: perché que-
ste testimonianze sieno vissute. Così ha fatto in
Italia con Veloce solo vivere, per il quale Mimmo
Calopresti ha passato due anni immersosi
nel muovere di novi sopravvissuti ita-
liani ad Auschwitz. Nove storie, ognuna a sua
modo folgorante e violentamente commovente,
proprio perché persona e, filtrata da una sensibi-
lità: particolare che rende visibile la persona, non
uno numero coalto nel dramma della Storia. E
sono le parole allora ad avere il primato sul re-
portorio, sulle immagini ormai trattamente note.
Le parole di Shlomo Venezia, per esempio, ab-
detto ai fornì crematori, che racconta ogni picco-
lo dettaglio di quel dramma rituale mirato all'eli-
minazione sistematica dei translationi. La stesi-
zione, gli abiti messi in ordine nell'illusione di
poterli indossare con nuovo all'uscita delle 
vecce, le scatole allineate e allacciate tre di loro per
non perdere il tutto e successivamente ristabi-
liati e poi i corpi «congelati» e assoggettati a di
loro di riordinare metodolosamente per mettere sulle barche da iscrivere nei crematori. E quel
giorno in cui Shlomo ha dovuto accompagnare
nel «rituale» un suo parente: «Ho cercato di dar-
gli consiglio - racconta - e di farlo mangiare qual-
cosa: la fame era insopportabile lì. Della fame,
quella che riduce i corpi a scheletri, racconta
uno tutti. Nino Piana, fiorentino che aveva al-
lora 18 anni, spiega la speranza per intenere la
rampa più viva, di mettere in fuga alla fil-
la - racconta - perché chi arriva e da ultimo ave-
va il mestolo che pesava più o meno e prendeva
altro impegno. E ancora c'è Andrea Bucci di Farnese. Lei ad Au-
schwitz è arrivata che aveva appena quarto anni
con la madre, la nonna, la sorella e i cugini.
Tutti morti. Lei si è salvata grazie alla simpatia di
un capo che aveva i bambini di non rispondere
razi di voler andare dalla propria mamma, quand-
oi gli ho detto che erano chiusi. Venticinque i
soli cugini per il loro solo furono spediti ad Am-
burgo insieme ad altri ragazzi, uccisi dai soldati
esperimento medico. E c'è il ricordo della liber-
zione. E quel cappello che finalmente si spalan-
rà. È dei nazisti che ai volto le divise, che cer-
cano di confonderli con i civili in fila. Lo rac-
ta un altro testimone, Liliana Segre: «In quel
momento ho visto accanto a me il comandante
che fino ad un attimo prima aveva scavato il po-
tere di vita e di morte. Gli ho visto mettere via la
pistola proprio ai miei piedi. Allora lo pensavo
ci prendesse e vi sparasse. E avrei avuto il di-
nitto del mondo... Eppure non l'ho fatto perché la
cultura in cui sono cresciuto e in cui credo è quel-
la della vita e non quella della morte. Tutto que-
sto è da non dimenticare.
The Heart Doesn’t Forget

February, 2006 by Simone Congedo

In 1994, Steven Spielberg established Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation to videotape and preserve testimonies of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses before it was too late. The Shoah Foundation Institute interviewed more than 400 Holocaust survivors and other witnesses in Italy from January 1998 until December 1999. More than 40 Italian interviewers and 20 videographers devoted their time to this effort. The entire collection of more than 400 testimonies recorded in Italy is now available for public viewing and for educational use at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, in Rome. Mimmo Calopresti’s documentary film is part of this large project.

Mimmo Calopresti’s latest project is a documentary about Italian survivors of the Nazi camps. For two years, he watched and selected the videotaped interviews gathered by the Shoah Foundation, which was founded by Steven Spielberg in ’94 to preserve the memories of Holocaust survivors. “After a trip to Auschwitz with Mayor Walter Veltroni and some students from Rome,” explains the director, “I started working on this film. The biggest task was to listen to the interviews with the survivors and believe the things they were saying because they were literally unbelievable.” The film is largely based on the words of the nine chosen witnesses. The camera is fixed in one place and the editing simple because no effects are necessary for their stories to reach the audience.

Mimmo Calopresti has created something more than a simple documentary: He has created a living, desperate poem. And, as is so often the case with poetry, we can begin by analyzing the title: “I Only Wanted to Live.” The film is about nine people who are only the spokesmen for a much larger population: the deportees.

Yet the title is in the singular form. This is because it symbolizes the cry of all those who died and survived the Holocaust. One voice, one horror, one destiny.

The alliteration of volevo vivere (I Wanted to Live) is beautiful. Written with the verb in the imperfect tense, the title describes a past wish that was somehow hindered but continues into the present.

The word “only,” which is placed in the middle, represents the idea of living as merely a small, simple request. For some, living is not only considered a given; it would almost be banal while, for others, it is their ultimate desire. The film opens with archival footage of Mussolini in 1938
announcing the passing of the anti-Semitic laws, which were justified by a supposed racial superiority.

The stories all begin with the survivors’ capture. Their memories are very similar. The Germans enter the city and begin to round up the Jews. All of the survivors featured were children or teenagers at the time. The oldest was 18, and almost none of them was able to understand what was happening. However, the stories reveal a certain amount of disbelief and unawareness among the adults as well. One of the women traveling in the same car as one of the nine survivors said she wasn’t very worried as she believed that “in the end, what are they going to do? It’s not like they’re going to kill us.”

The nine survivors’ photographs, taken the same year they were deported, when they were still healthy and with their families, are very evocative when compared with those of the camp survivors taken just after liberation.

The trip can only be called inhuman. Jammed into freight cars, they couldn’t all lie or sit down at the same time so they had to sleep and stay awake in three-hour shifts. Toilets were obviously non-existent, so they used a corner of the car as a makeshift bathroom for everyone. However, almost all of them said that this wasn’t the worst part because at least everybody was still together. For Andra Bucci, her deportation was even a “trip of love” because she met a young man whom she fell in love with although she never saw him again. The arrival at the station was definitely more dramatic. The separation of the children from their mothers, relatives, or friends was brutal. They were sorted by gender, and only those who could work were kept alive. The others faced certain death.

Esterina Calo’ Di Veroli’s testimony was very touching. She begins her interview by talking about her father, whom she adored and who was her sole parent after her mother’s untimely death. The last time she saw him was at the station at Auschwitz. She wasn’t even able to say goodbye to him. This is an all-too common experience for those who lived through those times. For example, Arminio Wachsberger, who was chosen by Josef Mengele to be his personal interpreter, watched his family be taken away for immediate extermination. Later on, he asked Mengele why. His answer was very clear: His daughter was a Jew. The motives for his wife’s killing were even more disturbing. Why kill a 30-year-old healthy woman who could still work? Because no woman whose child has been killed is able to do anything. She’s dead weight and must be eliminated. Calopresti’s decision to choose people of both sexes, who come from different parts of Italy, but are also from different social classes, is noteworthy. Obviously, these differences disappear in the face of such a tragic shared experience. Shlomo Venezia’s testimony is very useful to try to understand, at least in part, what the camp inmates had to endure. At age 20, he was sent to work in the crematoria as part of the Sonderkommando.

“There was never a time when the number of people coming in decreased or increased. The line was never-ending.” This is how Shlomo explains the flow of Jews going into the showers and, thus, into the crematoria ovens. He even saw one of his father’s cousins, Leone Venezia, die. The only thing he could do for him was get him a bit of bread and some sardines: a condemned man’s clandestine final meal. For 47 years, he kept silent about the horrors he witnessed in Auschwitz-Birkenau: “When I began to see anti-Semitic slurs and banners at the stadiums and on the streets, I started telling my story. In ’92, I accompanied a group of students to Auschwitz. Since then, I’ve been back 37 more times with every school in Italy in order to impart my testimony to the students.”
But I think that the real abomination created by the Nazi camps is actually something else. Death and suffering, hunger, and the need to wash yourself since falling ill amounted to death are the components of a process of transformation in which man ceases to be a human being. The shame of being naked in front of an officer who’s inspecting you disappears because to him you are no longer a body that he can desire or judge. A comrade who dies is no longer the loss of a person dear to you, but is only a bigger meal for the survivors. People don’t communicate in the camp because talking while working is forbidden. The daily 20-minute break is too short to rest, eat, and talk. And at night, you hope that tomorrow doesn’t come and you collapse, exhausted, onto the bed that you share with three or four other people.

You are a guinea pig like Settimia Spizzichino, who was covered in sores after they experimented on her with scabies vaccines.

Consider if this is a man
Who works in the mud
Who does not know peace
Who fights for a scrap of bread
Who dies because of a yes or a no.
Consider if this is a woman,
Without hair and without name
With no more strength to remember,
Her eyes empty and her womb cold
Like a frog in winter.

The conclusion of this dramatic experience can be found in Nedo Fiano’s harsh, stark words, which can only be truly understood by those who were there: “You can walk out of Auschwitz, but you leave behind your heart and soul.”

I Only Wanted to Live
(Israel/Italy/Switzerland, 2005)
Director Mimmo Calopresti
Rai cinema/01 distribution
Il cuore non dimentica

VOLTARE SOLO VIVERE

un film di Mimmo Calopresti

L'ultimo lavoro di Mimo Catapani è un documentario, tratta dei sopravvissuti italiani ai lager nazisti. Per due anni ha visionato e selezionato le video interviste raccolte dalla Shoah Foundation, fondata da Steven Spielberg nel 94 per preservare i ricordi dei sopravvissuti all'Olocausto. "Dopo un viaggio ad Auschwitz con il sindaco Walter Veltroni e alcuni studenti romani - racconta il regista - ho iniziato a lavorare su questo film: l'impegno maggiore era ascoltare le interviste ai sopravvissuti e credere alle cose che dicevano, perché erano letteralmente incredibili". Il film si basa per lo più sulle parole dei nove testimoni scelti; la macchina da presa è fissa, il montaggio è semplice, perché non servono effetti affinché i loro racconti giungano allo spettatore.

Mimo Catapani ha creato qualcosa di più di un semplice documentario: ha creato una poesia, viva e disperata. E come è giusto fare per le poesie bisogna iniziare ad analizzarle dal titolo: "Volevo solo vivere". La storia tratta di nove protagonisti, e quei nove sono solo i portavoce di un popolo ben più ampio, quello dei deportati. Eppure, il titolo è al singolare: questo perché simboleggia il grido corale di tutti i morti e i sopravvissuti dell'Olocausto. Una sola voce, un solo orrore, un solo destino.

Belissima l'allitterazione di volevo vivere, una volontà passata, in un certo qual modo ostacolata, ma con una continuità nel presente, ben espressa dall'imperfetto. E “solo”, che si trascina, presentando l’idea di vivere come una piccola e semplice richiesta, ciò che per qualcuno e non solo scontato, ma quasi banale, per altri è il massimo desiderio. L’opera si apre con un filmato d’epoca nel quale Mussolini, nel 1938, annuncia il voler delle leggi antiesemite, giustificate da una supposta superiorità razziale.

Inizialmente i racconti iniziano con la cattura. I ricordi sono molto simili. I tedeschi che entrano in città e cominciano a rastrellare ebrei. Tutti i protagonisti all’epoca erano bambini o adolescenti, il più anziano aveva diciotto anni e quasi nessuno era in grado di capire cosa stesse accadendo. Ma dai racconti traspare una incredulità e un’inconcepribilità anche negli adulti: una delle donne che viaggiava nello stesso vagone con una delle protagoniste non si dichiarò particolarmente preoccupata perché sostenne “in fondo cosa possono fare, mila possono ucciderci?...” Particolarmente evocative le fotografie dei nove sopravvissuti scattate lo stesso anno della deportazione, quando ancora erano in famiglia e in salute, messe a confronto con quelle dei sopravvissuti dei lager, scattate subito dopo la liberazione.
Il viaggio può darsi disumano. Stipati in vagoni merci, non tutti potevano stare sdraiati o seduti per cui si facevano turni di tre ore di veglia e tre di sonno. I servizi igienici erano ovviamente inesistenti per cui si sceglieva uno degli angoli del vagone e si adibiva a bagno comune. Ma nel ricordo di molti, non era quella la parte peggiore perché per lo meno si stava insieme. Addirittura per Andrea Bacci, la sua deportazione è stato un “viaggio d’amore”, perché li ha conosciuto un ragazzo, che ha amato, anche se poi non l’ha più rivisto. Decisamente più drammatico l’arrivo alla stazione. La separazione dei figli dalle madri, dei mariti e degli amici è brutale. Si veniva selezionati, sminuiti per sesso e solo coloro che potevano lavorare erano tenuti in vita; per gli altri la fine certa era la morte.

Molto toccante la narrazione di Estrella Calò Di Veroli, la quale aveva iniziato l’intervista parlando di suo padre, figura che lei adorava, anche perché con la precoce perdita della madre era il suo unico punto di riferimento. L’ultima volta l’ha vista alla stazione di Auschwitz; non ha potuto nemmeno salutarla. Ma questo genere di racconti è consuetudine per chi ha vissuti quei momenti. Basti pensare ad Arminio Wächsberger, scelto da Josef Mengele come suo interprete personale. La sua famiglia fu immediatamente stermintata. Tempo dopo chiese a Mengele il perché. Lui gli rispose: per sua figlia era semplice, era un ebreo. Per sua moglie, invece, le argomentazioni furono ancora più inquietanti. Perché uccidere una donna di trent’anni in salvo, che può ancora lavorare? Perché nessuna donna a cui uccidono il figlio è più disposta a fare nulla. È un peso e va eliminato. Da notare anche la scelta di Calopresti di selezionare non solo persone di sesso diverso e provenienti da varie parti d’Italia, ma anche di ceto sociale differente. Ovviamente le diversità spariscono davanti ad una così tragica esperienza comune. Davvero significativa per comprendere, almeno in parte, ciò che hanno dovuto subire i prigionieri di un lager, la testimonianza di Shalom Venezia, un vent’anni mandato a lavorare al Sonderkommando, i fornì crematori. “Non c’erano momenti in cui arrivava più gente e altri meno, era una cosa perpetuata.” Con queste parole Shalom spiega l’affluenza degli ebrei alla doccia e quindi ai fornì. Ha perfino visto morire un cognato di suo padre, Leone Venezia. Tutto quello che ha potuto fare per lui è procurargli un po’ di pane e di sardine: un clandestino ultimo pasto del condannato. Ha trascorso per 47 anni sugli orrori a cui aveva assistito ad Auschwitz-Birkenau: “Quando ho iniziato a vedere scritte e striscioni antissemiti negli stadi e per le strade, ho iniziato a raccontare. Nel ’92 ho accompagnato ad Auschwitz alcuni studenti; da quel momento ci sono tornato altre 37 volte con tutte le scuole d’Italia per passare al ragazzi la mia testimonianza.”

Ma il vero abominio prosciutto dai lager nazisti credo sia ancora un altro. La morte e la sofferenza, la fame, la necessità di lavorare, poiché essere ammalati equivale a morire, sono le componenti di un processo di trasformazione che portano l’uomo a non essere più uomo. Sopravvivono la vergogna di essere nudi davanti ad un ufficiale che ti ispeziona perché per lui non sei più un corpo, che può desiderare o giudicare. Un compagno che muore non è più la perdita di una persona cara, ma è solo un pasto più abbondante per i superstiti. La gente non comunica in un lager perché mentre si lavora è viatato parlare; i venti minuti di pausa giornalieri sono troppo pochi per recuperare le forze, mangiare e parlare. E la sera si spara solo che non inizi un altro domani e si crolla sfiniti sul letto, magari condiviso con altre 3 o 4 persone.

Sei una cavia, come Settima Spizzichino, coperta di piaghe quando hanno provato su di lei un vaccino contro la scarbella. Allora bisogna chiedersi se questo è un uomo che lavora nel campo che non conosce la pace che lotta per mezzo pane che muore per un si o per un no.

E se questa è una donna senza capelli e senza nome senza più forza di ricordare Vuole gli occhi e fredda il grumbo Come una rana d’inverno.

E la conclusione di questa drammatica esperienza la si può trovare nelle parole, dure, definitive, che possono essere capite davvero solo da chi c’è stato, di Nedo Fiano: “Da Auschwitz si esce con le gambe, ma si rimane col cuore.”

Simone Congedo

Volevo solo vivere
(Israele/Italia/Svizzera, 2005)
Regia Mimmo Calopresti
Rai cinema/01 distribution

FEBRAIO PAGINA 11
NOI RICORDIAMO
Il Progetto della Memoria delle scuole di Roma

In occasione della giornata della Memoria (27 gennaio), i 1500 studenti delle scuole superiori di Roma che partecipano al progetto del Comune di Roma “Noi Ricordiamo” hanno assistito in anteprima alla proiezione del film documentario “Volevo solo vivere”. Questi ragazzi rappresentano una pubblico particolarmente attento, sensibile e informato sulla Shoah, in quanto da anni le scuole di Roma lavorano sul tema della Memoria e della sua trasmissione alle future generazioni.

“Noi Ricordiamo” è il progetto educativo realizzato dal Comune di Roma rivolto agli istituti superiori e alle scuole medie della città. A cominciare dall’anno scolastico 2001/2002 e per ogni anno successivo il Comune ha elaborato e proposto alle scuole progetti educativi sulla Memoria, la Shoah, la Resistenza e la Liberazione.

In questi quattro anni di attività, il Progetto “Noi Ricordiamo” ha coinvolto sempre più scuole e studenti, fino a raggiungere l’attuale numero di 51 istituti Superiori, 32 scuole medie. Dal 2003 ogni anno in autunno, in concomitanza con le celebrazioni del Rastrellamento del Ghetto di Roma il 15 ottobre 1943, il Comune organizza un viaggio ad Auschwitz per un centinaio di studenti delle scuole superiori aderenti al Progetto. I ragazzi ogni anno sono accompagnati dal Sindaco Walter Veltroni, dall’Assessore alle Politiche educative e scolastiche Maria Cossia e da alcuni ex deportati e superstiti della Shoah, che offrono sul luogo simbolo dello sterminio nazista la loro indelebile e indimenticabile testimonianza.

Negli ultimi due anni hanno, inoltre, partecipato al viaggio, apportando il proprio contributo, alcuni artisti particolarmente sensibili a queste tematiche. Il regista Mimmo Calopresti ha realizzato un film documentario sul viaggio, inoltre l’autore-attore Ascanio Celestini ha raccolto impressioni e testimonianze dei partecipanti al viaggio, insieme alle immagini del fotografo Marco Delogu per uno spettacolo che è stato presentato in anteprima in occasione della settimana della Memoria 2006. A conclusione di ogni Progetto viene allestita una mostra dei lavori e degli elaborati degli studenti presso il Compleso Museale del Vittoriano.

Gli studenti negli anni sono stati protagonisti con performance di musica, teatro e danza in eventi importanti come il concerto in Piazza Venezia per il 60° della Liberazione di Roma e quello per il 25 Aprile 2005 a Piazza S. Giovanni. Utilmente, ogni anno, in occasione delle celebrazioni del 27 Gennaio Giornata Nazionale della Memoria le scuole aderenti al Progetto hanno realizzato un evento di teatro, danza, musica e testimonianze rivolto a tutte le scuole superiori della città. Obiettivo primario del Progetto è creare nuovi testimoni, affinché il valore della Memoria si imprima nelle coscienze delle future generazioni e si rafforzi quale patrimonio collettivo e incancellabile. In questo processo la scuola pubblica si conferma quale luogo di formazione delle coscienze dei giovani e di condivisione e trasmissione di valori che fortificano le istituzioni democratiche.
Shoah, the duty of remembrance according to Spielberg and Calopresti

Giancarlo Leone’s plea to theater owners regarding “I Only Wanted to Live”:
Be sensitive, the film will only run in a few cities.

The documentary with the Italian testimonies in theaters

Milan, January 25, 2006          by Emilia Costantini

“When they took me from the camp barracks to a clean room, with a clean bed and they had me put on a clean nightgown, I thought: ‘And now what are they going to do to me?’ Maybe it’s a reward for good behavior.’ Not a chance! The next morning they started the experiments. They infected me with typhus and scabies.” Settimia Spizzichino is one of the survivors of the Nazis’ atrocities. She was deported with her family after the roundup in the Rome ghetto on October 16, 1943,. She passed away a few years ago, but her invaluable testimony remains in the archives of the Shoah Foundation Institute, which was founded by Steven Spielberg in ’94. Her story and that of nine other Italian citizens who survived deportation comprise “I Only Wanted to Live.” A documentary film directed by Mimmo Calopresti, co-produced by Spielberg with Gage’ Produzioni, Wildside Media and Rai Cinema, it will be in theaters on January 27 (on January 31 in Milan) for the celebration of the Day of Memory. The documentary, premiering on the 26th at the Auditorium of Rome, is part of a large project promoted by the City of Rome titled “We Remember,” which, since 2001, has involved an ever-increasing number of schools and has also sponsored school trips to Auschwitz.

Settimia continues: “I was ravaged by the sores from the scabies. When I looked at myself in the mirror, I didn’t recognize myself anymore.” Other survivors featured in the film are Andra Bucci, deported when she was only 4; Esterina Di Veroli, who was forced to take part in a so-called “death march”; Nedó Fiano, taken away to Birkenau with his family members and orphaned at age 18; Luciana Momigliano Nissim, who worked as a doctor in the prisoners’ infirmary and was a friend of Primo Levi’s; and Shlomo Venezia, who was in charge of cremating the bodies. Today he is 83 years old, and he says, “We were called the ‘Sonderkommandos’ and we had the horrible task of loading the bodies

(more)
onto a stretcher and sliding it into the ovens. When the war was over, and I told people what happened to me, they thought I was crazy. So, I kept silent for 40 years until one day, three years ago, they asked me to accompany students to Auschwitz. I didn’t want to go back, but then I agreed to, and since then, I’ve been back 37 times. It’s important that my testimony is passed on to young people.”

The film opens with Mussolini’s speech on racial policy in Trieste on September 18, 1938. The suffering of thousands of Italian Jews began from then on. Calopresti, who had to watch hundreds of testimonies, explains, “I had to begin to believe the unbelievable. I have been profoundly changed.” Mayor Veltroni adds, “This memory must be passed on to the young people. It’s only been a short time since we’ve begun to talk about the Shoah again. There was a 30-year-long silence.” Giancarlo Leone, the managing director of Rai Cinema, concludes, “The film will also be broadcasted on TV and will be available on DVD, but since it is only scheduled to be shown in a few cities, we ask for theater owners to be sensitive.”

PHOT CAPTION (L)
Steven Spielberg and Domenico Calopresti, who directed *I Only Wanted to Live*

PHOTO CAPTION (R)
A detail from the poster for the documentary film *I Only Wanted to Live*, directed by Mimmo Calopresti and co-produced by Spielberg, Wildside Media and Rai Cinema, which will open in theaters on January 27 (on January 31 in Milan) for the celebration of the Day of Memory. The film will also be broadcasted on TV and will be available on DVD.
Appello di Giancarlo Leone per "Volevo solo viver..." esercenti siano sensibili, il film arriva solo in poche città

"Quando dalla banca del campo mi portavano in una stanza pulita, con l'etichetta e mi lessero indossare una camicia da notte pulita, ho pensato: "E solo per questo che mi faranno? Io forse un premio perché mi siano comportati bene?" Ecco che la mia vita dopo cominciò a essere ancora più infelice."


Il 27 gennaio, la Giornata della Memoria, è il giorno dedicato alla memoria delle vittime della Shoah. Insieme a mimmo Calopresti, che ha collaborato a questo progetto, sono stati invitati altri registi come Roberto Benigni e Roberto Ampuero, che hanno partecipato alla produzione del film "La Shoah, il dovere della memoria secondo Spielberg e Calopresti: il cinema il documentario con le testimonianze degli italiani".