

A Special Community

I have lived in New York City for several decades, but my hometown is Pisa, the birthplace of Galileo and, of course, the city of the leaning tower. To escape the Fascists I left Pisa in the early part of January 1939, at the age of twenty-four, and came to live in the United States. Shortly before I left, I was graduated from the medical school of Pisa, intending to become a psychiatrist. I owe it to my Aunt Yolanda that I was able to leave Italy and come to the United States—an event that both saved my life and gave it a special direction. Yolanda discovered that in Switzerland we could get American visas in a hurry. She went to Montreux and then to Zurich, making all the necessary contacts and inquiries. My brother and I were to go to Switzerland on separate days, on the pretext of going skiing, and from there make our way to America. The plan had to be carried out secretly. Yolanda, only nine years older than I, together with my uncle Giampaolo, who accompanied me to junior high school the first day classes were held, are the persons to whom this book is dedicated.

My last few days in Pisa were spent mostly with my parents. They were as determined to remain in Italy as they were eager for my brother and me to leave.

I also said goodbye to two or three people who were very impor-

tant to me. One of these was Giuseppe Pardo Roques, the *parnas*. This Hebrew word, pronounced with the accent on the second syllable, is commonly used by Sephardic Jews and means “leader,” generally the president of the congregation. I remember hearing the word for the first time in the synagogue when I was a child. My grandfather, Giacomo Bemporad, pointed to Giuseppe Pardo Roques and whispered, “That’s the parnas.” My grandfather did not have the patience to explain what “parnas” meant, but noticing the deferential way people acted toward this very dignified man, I grasped the meaning of the word. I realized that, together with the rabbi, Pardo was the person holding the highest position in the synagogue. He used to sit in his own special seat in a section to the right of the altar that was reserved for prominent persons. I can still remember the seating arrangement in this section of the synagogue. Next to the altar was the seat of Rabbi Augusto Hasdà; then came the seat of Cantor Salomone Cassuto; then the most prominent member of our congregation, David Supino, who had been made a lifetime senator of the kingdom of Italy. And next to David Supino sat the parnas. These persons were the only ones in the congregation to have chairs with *braccioli* (that is, arms).

So, in early January 1939, I went to see the parnas. He received me, as he had done so many times before, in his spacious living room. I told him that I was about to leave Italy, and that I had come to say goodbye. I said I hoped that both he and my parents would also decide to leave. We were sitting facing each other. He spoke to me firmly but gently; he was sixty-four years old and I twenty-four, but the forty years’ difference in our ages was dissolved by his tender way of making me feel accepted and the object of his concern.

He said, “Thank you for coming to see me, Silvano. I agree that the best thing for you is to go. I am sorry to see you leave. I have known you since you were born. Please, write to me. I understand your hope that your parents and I will leave Italy, but each

of us has to do what he believes right and appropriate. Each of us has to be true to himself and to what he seeks from life. I believe I must stay here; your parents have to decide for themselves. As for you, I know you have made the right choice. You will do well in America, Silvano. I have confidence in you. Perhaps one day you will come back to Pisa and visit me. You will be full of knowledge and wisdom, and you will be able to help me.”

I was not sure what he meant. I knew that, for him, to be true to what one seeks from life meant to be true to one’s calling; but what did he mean when he said that perhaps I would be able to help him? Certainly not with the administration of the congregation. Did he mean help in a personal way? Had he discovered my secret? Had he figured out that I intended to become a psychiatrist because of him, because the strange illness that afflicted him had always stirred my imagination and had played a major part in my ambition to be of help to others? I did not ask him then. I was moved and felt too respectful to question him. I do not remember how I answered. Our meeting was short. In the past, sometimes he spoke tersely, sometimes he was rather verbose. That time he was brief. We shook hands and parted.

Who was this Giuseppe Pardo Roques (whom I shall refer to as Signor Pardo, Pardo, or Giuseppe)? As parnas, one of his main occupations was to see to the continuity of both the religious and the philanthropic services of the congregation. This was not an easy task, for the Jewish congregation of Pisa had undergone a steady decline in the twentieth century—especially as more and more of its members had moved to larger cities. Thus there had been a sharp decrease in available funds. But money was not the most urgent problem. Pardo himself was a very wealthy man. As a bachelor with no family to provide for, he might easily have felt that there was no better way to use his money than by turning to black the red figures in the account books of the congregation. The real difficulty was the scarcity of people willing to share the

various obligations that kept the congregation going. Pardo spent most of his time in administration, including looking after the elementary school associated with the synagogue, where I myself had learned to read and write. I remember very well how he used to come to inspect the school. He was very much interested in me and in my progress; I had no doubt that he had faith in me. He once gave me a children's book about the Old Testament, which I still have. Nothing pleased me more than to hear him and my teacher praise my "brilliance." This made me happy, but it also provoked some apprehension in me lest I not live up to their expectations.

Pardo did not limit his charitable activities to the Jewish community but was a real "benefactor"—as he was usually called—of Christian and nondenominational groups as well. Friday was the day of the poor people at Pardo's house. People in trouble—those who had no money for medicines or doctors, for instance, or no means to buy a railroad ticket to visit a sick child in a different city, or, more frequently, literally no money for a decent lunch or supper—could knock at Pardo's door on Friday, certain of being received, heard, helped. Pardo also distributed tokens that could be exchanged for meals at a restaurant in the square of the food market, where he had made special arrangements. His beneficiaries had only to state their case, which was accepted on faith. No identity papers were needed. Over 99 percent of the people who came on Friday were Christians. Pardo's only request was that they come before sunset, when the Sabbath starts.

The Pardo family had lived for many generations in a sumptuous home in Sant' Andrea Street, a street where many Jews as well as many Christians lived. Pardo's house was opposite the house of my grandparents, where I was born. Its address was number 22, and my grandparents' was number 23. Even today, there are a few old people who remember when the Pardo family had a horse, a fiacre, and a coachman in uniform. Later the horse and the French-style coach were replaced by a car and a chauffeur.

Pardo's home must have had about twenty-five rooms—I never counted them—and a beautiful garden. In the garden there was a well that always provided drinking water, even during those occasional hot summers when there was a drought. Near the well was a fountain, whose running water was provided by the well.

The room that I knew best in his house was the one in which he received me when I went to say goodbye to him. It was on the main floor, and from it we could see the garden. It was beautifully furnished, with no ostentation but with many valuable objects, books, and paintings that revealed the highest of both Italian and Hebrew culture. For at least two decades this room had been a cultural salon.

I was in that salon several times between 1932 and 1938. During most of that period, or at least between 1932 and 1937, Mussolini had not yet become anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi. As a matter of fact, in 1934, when Hitler organized the assassination of the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss in order to prepare for the *Anschluss* (the union of Austria to Germany), Mussolini sent two divisions to the Brenner Pass and committed himself to defending the independence of Austria. Moreover, in April 1935 Italy had participated in the Conference of Stresa and signed an agreement condemning the violations perpetrated by Nazi Germany and reaffirming the spirit of the Treaty of Locarno. It was after the Ethiopian War (1935–1936) that Mussolini became tied to Hitler and engaged more and more in the latter's anti-Semitic program. While out-and-out alliance with the Nazis was to wait until the late 1930s, Fascism had exercised a chilling influence over the whole of Italian culture from the beginning of the Mussolini dictatorship in 1925.

In Pisa the Fascists brought about a drastic restriction of the famous local university. Under these circumstances Pardo's salon became the place where people of all ages, including young people like me, could meet well-known professors or celebrities who had come from many lands to lecture at the university or to visit Pardo.

In his home we felt we could breathe clean air. Pardo himself was an eloquent speaker despite an odd nasal timbre to his voice. I used to admire his style. He was equally at ease with the most erudite language and the simplest popular expressions; sometimes his sentences were formal classic structures, sometimes pieces of common Tuscan dialogue. When he spoke, there was a quality in Pardo that is difficult to define. All of us agreed that his extraordinary lucidity made him almost irresistibly persuasive. Yet this quality I speak of—call it hypnotic—frequently overtook people even before he could set out his persuasive arguments.

It was in Pardo's salon that I first heard discussions of Martin Buber and existentialism. It was there that I first heard of Ahad Haam, the great Zionist thinker. It was there that I first heard Freud and psychoanalysis being talked about openly—especially by an authority on the subject, Professor Enzo Bonaventura.

I cannot here name all the people I met in Pardo's salon, but one man particularly—Nahum Sokolow—stands out vividly in my memory. Sokolow was at that time president of the World Zionist Organization, the successor to Chaim Weizmann. As a writer, Sokolow has been credited with introducing a new style to Hebrew literature, a blending of Western secularism and religious mysticism. When we heard him (I cannot recollect the exact date, but I believe it must have been in 1934, when I was twenty) Sokolow, now an old man, spoke with a mixture of anxiety and hope about the hard times ahead for the Zionist cause. The Nazis had come to power in Germany, and the United States—which was Zionism's main source of financial support—was going through a severe economic depression.

Pardo himself was versed not only in biblical and talmudic studies but also in modern literature, philosophy, and all the political currents and movements that brought so much upheaval to Europe in the first four decades of the twentieth century. The horizons of provincial life, restricted by Fascist nationalism, in Pardo's home were made to open out on the great world. It was

there in that salon, with its very special blend of Hebrew intellectuality and passionate internationalism, that I was given my first preparation for what was to become my American life. Pardo's salon was an outpost of my hometown-to-be, New York City.

But all this only begins my story of the parnas of Pisa. In addition to his authority, wisdom, beneficence, and wide culture, I must mention that Giuseppe Pardo Roques was mentally ill. Indeed his illness, recognized and overlooked by all, is of great significance to this story. And even though I am a psychiatrist, I must stress that its importance is not that of a case history.

What exactly Pardo's mental illness was, might be a matter of psychiatric debate. Its most obvious symptoms were phobias, that is, fears that have no justification. Most of all, Pardo was afraid of animals—mice, rats, cats, and especially dogs. I remember seeing him pass by on his daily walk. He always carried a cane, which he frequently switched behind his back from one hand to the other with a semicircular motion. He was using the cane to explore and to reassure himself that no dogs or other animals were around. He used the cane in the way blind people do, except that instead of exploring what was ahead of him, he explored what was in back of him and could not be seen. Although he followed this procedure slowly and with great discretion, the purpose of what he was doing was obvious to those who had become accustomed to seeing him. Some pitied him, some laughed at him.

In any case, a mountain of rumors had come to center on his peculiar habits. One would often hear someone talking about Pardo's ridiculous gestures or laughing about the way he labored to avoid what was not there. It was said that when he thought he was alone, he would repeat elaborate rituals for hours and hours, each ritual designed to reassure him that there were no animals nearby. He had to choose between the agonizing rituals or the terror of an attack of panic. On certain days these phobias would follow him like ghosts no matter where he went. On other days

when he experienced intense fears everywhere, Pardo would be forced to stay home in his bedroom or study.

And yet, when he appeared in administrative capacities, at public functions, at social gatherings, in public debates, or at the Rattivati, Pisa's most aristocratic club, he displayed the most gentle and dignified bearing. Moreover, he showed himself to be an utterly fearless man, courageously prepared to defend the underprivileged, the underdog, the distressed in any way—in short, anyone beset by a realistic fear and confronted with a realistic danger. Thus his almost constant fear was accompanied by a constantly available courage. The continuous pattern of seeing danger to himself for which no help was available was companion to a pattern of promptly providing help for the suffering of fearful others. But other people's fears and dangers were recognized by the world; his own fears, in their fully tragic intensity, were known only to himself.

Some of the young boys of the town openly made fun of Pardo or played tricks on him. On Saturday morning Italian boys go to school, but occasionally a Saturday would be a school holiday. It was especially on these days that the boys were sure to catch Pardo when he left the synagogue after the morning service. Now and then they would hide with a dog at a corner of the street where he used to turn and push the animal toward him. At other times they would imitate the barking of a dog. Pardo tried his best to overcome panic, and he often succeeded. He acted as if he did not hear or see; he changed routes and tried his best to maintain the dignity that his age and position required. Even the students of the University of Pisa, who by age and education should have known better, would sometimes publish unsavory vignettes about him that were supposed to be funny. On the whole, though, the population of Pisa respected him. The people in his neighborhood liked him, and the poor loved him. He was the learned man, the benefactor, the only man in Pisa always ready to extend a hand to both Christians and Jews.

The fears that I have mentioned, and probably others, very largely restricted Pardo's life. He could not go far away from his home because he was afraid he would be exposed to the sight of animals. Thus he never traveled. With the tactlessness of a teenager I once asked him why he never went on vacations or visited places dear to him, like Jerusalem. He hesitated before answering, then said, "My health does not permit me to travel." He did not go further, but it was obvious that by health he meant mental health. Since I admired the man, in my private thoughts I compared him to the great philosopher Immanuel Kant, who in his long life never once traveled outside his native Koenigsberg. Great minds receive inspiration from an inner source, an inner life, I said to myself, and did not need the stimuli of new and different environments.

I believe now that Pardo's condition might have been more severe than a simple phobic one. It occurs to me that in some periods of great anxiety he might even have had quasi-hallucinatory experiences, that is, the impression of seeing or hearing the dreaded animals.

My father, who was a physician, had been Pardo's doctor for several years. My father, however, was a general practitioner. Although he must have known a good deal about the symptoms of Signor Pardo, he maintained the strictest professional confidentiality and never told us a word about him. My guess is that Signor Pardo must have consulted a few psychiatrists but soon gave up because none of them had been able to help him in any way.

I was very much taken up with his problem. As I have already mentioned, I attribute my main motivation for pursuing psychiatric studies to my relationship with Pardo. His illness had an aura of mystery that I hoped I could unveil one day. No matter how bizarre his behavior could be or how it verged on the ridiculous, to me it seemed insignificant compared to the inner turmoil from which it so clearly derived. How powerful that inner turbulence must be, I thought, if its visible manifestations could not be held

in check by even so powerful a mind and character. I wished he could be helped, maybe by me one day; yes, by me. Thus when he said that perhaps on my return I could be of help to him, I felt a pang of pain at having been discovered, at having possibly revealed my presumptuousness, and yet at the same time I felt reaffirmed in my secret wish.

I was inclined to think that there were psychological reasons for Pardo's condition; but these reasons, of course, could not be traced without subjecting him to prolonged psychoanalytic therapy. And there was nobody capable of doing that type of work. What I could do at that time—and what I did do—was defend him from people's cruel tongues. When I heard insinuations about the reason Pardo had remained a bachelor, I strongly asserted my conviction that he was a bachelor because he did not want to impose the crippling restrictions of his illness on a wife. From the way in which he occasionally joked or spoke about women, I knew that he was not at all oblivious to the opposite sex.

But not only was Pardo's illness crucial in my having decided to become a psychiatrist in the first place; I also feel that it determined my attitude toward the mental patient in general, an attitude that was to become a major asset in my therapeutic efforts. I learned from Pardo's situation to see the mentally ill patient not simply as somebody to cure or to pity—that is, as someone whose assertions are not to be taken quite seriously—but as a person who, in addition to his illness, or in spite of his illness, or because of his illness, may have profound insight or wisdom to offer. This attitude, first learned from my acquaintance with the parnas, has only intensified with the passage of time, when I have been able to reflect on how much I have learned from mental patients, not just about illness, but about life itself.

Nevertheless, an important question arises about the Jews of Pisa: How could they have selected so ill a man to be their elder? Granted that he exercised the functions of parnas well, the fact remains that his handicaps were known to the whole city. Some

people, as I have said, made fun of them. Beyond that, there was always the danger that at some time or other the chief of the congregation would go into a state of panic not compatible with the dignity of his position. Was his acceptance due to the money he poured into the dwindling funds of the congregation?

The answer, I believe, is that the admiration in which the community held him far outweighed any doubts raised by the spectacle of his illness. My impression is that the Pisan Jews regarded one's mental illness as a matter of private concern, unless it was dangerous to others. Now, at just what point a mental illness is to be viewed as tolerable or as intolerable, or at what point it should prevent a person from holding public office, is hard to say. These limits have never been defined, and down to today they remain a subject of public discussion among psychiatrists, politicians, patients, and former patients. In the case of Pardo, I hope that the unfolding of this story will shed some light on the question.

First, then, it might be worthwhile to turn our attention to the Pisan Jewish community, the people who time after time would unanimously vote Pardo into the position of *parnas*.

At the time I left Italy, there were 280 Jews in Pisa; a small group but noticeable. Among them were a few university professors, a senator, doctors, lawyers, keepers of small or middle-sized stores, a family of industrialists, a blind beggar, a homosexual who taught mathematics and openly disclosed his sexual orientation, a few peddlers, and some blue-collar workers. Fundamentally conservative in the way they lived, they were in the avant-garde in the realm of attitudes and ideas. Though they stood together as a group, each one of them was a strong individualist, and a rather opinionated one. As much as they differed in economic status, social prestige, and education, most of them felt very close to one another. This closeness did not prevent them from having basically different ideas, even with respect to Jewish affairs and such things as the way Jews should feel about the Mus-

solini government. There were some who, together with the rabbi, Augusto Hasdà, considered themselves to be Italians of the Jewish religion without any allegiance to the international Jewish organizations that were sponsoring a return of Jews to the land of Israel.

In Turin such Jews, Jewish by religion only, published a periodical called *Our Flag* (*La Nostra Bandiera*). The majority of Italian Jews, who favored Zionism, nicknamed this paper *Our Fear* (*La Nostra Paura*), in the belief that only fear of irritating the nationalist government was inducing this kind of Jew to be a public anti-Zionist. But whatever the motive of many *Our Flag* Jews, some, like our rabbi, were sincerely fundamentalist in their Judaism. They believed that a return to the land of Israel should occur only by divine, not political, intervention. Most Pisan Jews, however, including Pardo, were in favor of a Jewish homeland in the biblical land of Israel.

Although it was always very small, the Jewish congregation of Pisa has an old and venerable history. Jews were living in the city long before the famous leaning tower was built. Benjamin of Tudela, a Jew born in Spain in the kingdom of Navarre, went on a long journey between 1159 and 1167 from his native Spain to Persia for the purpose of visiting and describing all the Jewish communities that he could find. He visited the south of France, Italy, Greece, Constantinople, Syria, Palestine, Persia, Yemen, Egypt, western Germany, and the north of France, and then he went back to Spain, where he wrote his famous book *The Travels of Benjamin*.

The first Italian city that Benjamin mentions is Genoa, where he found only two Jewish families. From Genoa Benjamin went on to Pisa, a journey that at that time required two days of traveling. In Pisa he found not fewer than twenty Jewish families. It is impossible to guess how many of the Pisan Jews that Benjamin encountered, if any, were descendants of those Jews who had been granted legal residence in lands ruled by Rome when Julius Cae-

sar made Judaism a legal religion and granted definite privileges and exemptions to its adherents. Perhaps some were descendants of the prisoners that the Emperor Titus brought to Italy after destroying the Second Temple. Perhaps some had recently arrived in Pisa, then a flourishing maritime republic that maintained a very active Levantine trade.

The little trading community that Benjamin of Tudela found in Pisa continued to exist throughout the subsequent centuries and still exists today. In the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, Jews who resided in Tuscany were referred to as Pisan citizens. During the Spanish Inquisition, which required Jews residing in Spain to make one of three choices—convert to Christianity, burn at the stake, or leave Spain—many took refuge in other countries, and some went to Italy, bringing with them their Sephardic culture. *Sephardic*, in the Hebrew etymology, means “Spanish”; but as the word has come to be used, it refers to all the Jews who themselves once lived or whose ancestors had once lived in Spain and Portugal. The Sephardic Jews developed a high cultural life in these lands of their origin, known in the annals of Jewish history, of course, as the Golden Age.

In 1492 (the year of the discovery of America, and of the banishment of the Jews from Spain in accordance with the resolution taken by the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada), Isacco da Pisa, a Jewish philanthropist who lived in Pisa, started to help Spanish refugees settle in the city. Isacco came from a family of bankers, and he founded the Monte di Pietà, a loan bank in Pisa that helped the underprivileged, one of the first of its kind in the world. I believe that among those refugees helped by Isacco da Pisa were some of my ancestors. Many other Spanish and, later, Portuguese refugees wandered from country to country for several years. Cosimo the First, Grand Duke of Tuscany, of the great Medici family, and his successor the Grand Duke Ferdinand invited a considerable number of fugitive Jews to settle in Pisa and Leghorn. The Medicis wished to promote Pisa as a commercial center, but

a much larger number of immigrants preferred to remain in the neighboring town of Leghorn, which grew as an international port. It was among the Jews of Leghorn that the philanthropist Moses Montefiore, so well known in England and in the United States, and the modern painter Amedeo Modigliani were born. Other immigrants went to other Italian cities that offered more opportunities.

Because the Spanish and Portuguese refugees outnumbered the original Italian Jews, practically all Jewish congregations in Italy, including that of Pisa, became Sephardic as far as religious culture is concerned. The little congregation of Pisa reached its acme in 1881, when its members numbered 700.

In many respects the Pisan Jews were a kind of paradigm of the whole of Italian Jewry. They, like Jews throughout Italy, had become assimilated into Italian culture in a short period of time. Within their families they continued to use some Spanish and Hebrew words, but they spoke Italian like the other citizens and considered themselves Italians of the Jewish faith.

During the *Risorgimento*, the historical complex of insurrections and wars of independence that, between 1848 and 1870, led to the liberation of Italy from foreign oppression and to its unification, Italian Jews participated actively in the momentous events. They provided asylum for the great patriot Mazzini. They enrolled in the volunteer army of "The Thousand," which, under the leadership of Garibaldi, liberated the south of Italy. Cavour, the first and the ablest Italian secretary of state, who, with the concerted military efforts of Garibaldi, succeeded in unifying Italy, had several friends among the Jews.

It can be said without hesitation that after the unification of Italy, there was no other country either in Europe or in the whole world where Jews felt so well integrated into the general population. If anti-Semitism existed, it was minimal and confined to certain small circles. In this climate, needless to say, Italian Jews prospered. Many of them belonged to the upper bourgeoisie or

to the intelligentsia. Although they never numbered more than 80,000, their impact on Italian life was considerable, especially in the cities of Ferrara, Milan, Turin, Venice, Rome, and Trieste. They especially excelled in the field of mathematics. Every student of higher mathematics knows the names of such innovators as Tullio Levi Civita, Giuseppe Peano, and Vito Volterra. Italy was the first Christian country to have a Jew as premier, Luigi Luzzatti, who held that office in 1910 and 1911. In fact, until Mussolini began to yield to Hitler's wishes, all had gone well between the Italian Jews and the rest of the Italians. But the man who on August 28, 1934 had rejected German racism with a grandiloquent sentence—"Thirty centuries of history allow us to look with sovereign disdain and piety on certain theories followed north of the Alps"—four years later began to imitate the Nazi leader with an anti-Semitism that, while not as fanatic as the German's, was nevertheless unequivocal. Many Jews began to prepare to leave Italy. I was one of them.

Pardo was not the only person I went to say goodbye to. Another was Pietro, my first patient.

I have already mentioned that a short time before I left Italy, I had been graduated from the medical school of Pisa. Although I had not formally begun postgraduate psychiatric training, I had written my thesis (required in European medical schools) in neuropsychiatry, and I had spent a considerable amount of time in the psychiatric department of the university. This department was directed by a person from whom I learned much neurology, Professor Giuseppe Ayala, who, as I discovered later on my arrival in America, was well known on this side of the Atlantic, too, for his studies on brain tumors. Professor Ayala was an excellent neurologist, but because of the way medical education was organized at that time, he was obliged to teach psychiatry as well, a field he considered inferior to neurology. Psychiatry thus was badly neglected in his department. Although only a student, I had read

Freud and the works of the Italian psychoanalyst Edoardo Weiss, and I was already a firm believer in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. Professor Ayala was very liberal, and in spite of my student status he allowed me to choose and treat some patients with psychotherapy. I chose to treat Pietro as my very first patient. It is because of his special relationship to me that he is the only person in this book to whom I refer by first name only.

Pietro was a very warm and interesting person. It is not difficult to understand why I selected him without hesitation. He was suffering from a severe type of phobia called *agoraphobia*. He was afraid to leave home, to walk on the streets, and especially to cross squares. At that time the only treatment available at the Institute for this type of illness consisted of changing the environment and prescribing some sedatives and some so-called tonic medicines like neurophosphates, allegedly supposed to strengthen the nervous system.

Pietro was intelligent and sensitive, and he suspected that except for the change of environment, the treatment was worthless. With the permission of Professor Ayala I attempted psychotherapy along psychoanalytic lines. I tried to understand and explain Pietro's conflicts, and in spite of my lack of adequate preparation, he gradually improved. Although I could not hope to achieve a complete recovery, I put a great deal of zeal, zest, and devotion into this, which was the first therapeutic attempt of my life and an arduous one. Pietro's fears diminished to the point where he could leave the Institute and dare to walk on the street, at first with the help of a bicycle, which he did not ride but took along as if it were a companion who could give him support and reassurance. Later he was able to venture out without any help. Pietro was a devoted husband and father, and a devout Catholic. He was very grateful to me. When I went to say goodbye to him and told him that I had to leave Italy in a hurry, he gave me the names and addresses of relatives in London whom I could contact in case of need. That need was indeed to arise. When I left

Italy, I stayed for a few weeks first in Switzerland and then in London, waiting for available room on a ship bound for America.

When I returned to Pisa after the war to see my parents, who unbelievably, miraculously, had escaped death, one of the first persons I met on the main street was Pietro. He was shocked and exuberantly happy to see me. He rushed to tell me many things about the terrible conditions in Pisa during the war. Since my parents had escaped from the city during that period and could not give me much information, I was eager to get it from Pietro.

The summer of 1944 had been bad beyond imagining. The city had been relentlessly bombed by the Allies, and the Germans, who had taken over that part of Italy after the fall of Mussolini, were vexing and terrorizing the Italian populace. They could not forgive the Italians for the fact that their new government, residing in the south, was now on the side of the Allies. The Germans knew very well that although the north of Italy was officially with Germany, the hearts of the majority of the people were not with them. During the last part of the war Pisa had almost become a ghost town, especially during the battle of the Arno River. The Arno divides Pisa into two parts, north and south. During this battle the Germans were north of the Arno, occupying a large part of Pisa, including the old city with its major monuments. The Allies were in the southern part. To escape the bombing, more than two-thirds of the population fled the city and spread out into villages in the surrounding country. Only a skeleton of administrative offices were still functioning, and only a small number of people had for various reasons decided to remain in their homes at any cost. Pietro was among them.

I asked Pietro why he had remained in the city. Without any hesitation he told me that it was because of his illness. After I left Italy in 1939, he continued to do well for some time, but unfortunately the illness came back toward the end of 1942. When the violence of the war quickened and most people evacuated the

city, he was among the few who remained behind. He felt almost stuck to the place where he lived, and he could not go beyond the block where his home was located. The fear caused by the neurosis was stronger than the fear of the dangers of the war. He lived not too far from the leaning tower and the other historical monuments. At first he convinced himself that both sides would respect the town's great art treasures and the mementos of its and Italy's glorious past. But soon it was quite clear that whether or not the armed forces of both sides wanted to respect the monuments, they were not so accurate in aiming at their targets. Many nearby houses were demolished, even on the block where he lived; several people were killed and many injured. Since he was compelled by his phobias to remain no farther than a block away from where he lived, after each bombing he would rush out to free people trapped in the nearby ruins, and he saved several lives.

Thus, at the end of the war, not only was he alive and safe, but he had also become a hero and was decorated for acts of heroism. His illness was then treated by a psychotherapist, and Pietro recovered. He is well now and lives somewhere in Italy. He continues to be the same warm, compassionate, and intelligent person he revealed himself to be when I first met him. In spite of his modesty and the absence of any desire to attain glory, his illness made him become a hero. It seemed to have bestowed on him a magic immunity from danger, so that he is still with us to tell his story of the war period and of the other many experiences of his rich life. I shall refer to him from time to time in the telling of my main story, the story of the other sufferer from phobias, Giuseppe Pardo Roques.