

After the war there was a sense of optimism; the worst was over. But now people had to rebuild their lives. I was three years old. I had two brothers and a sister and it was not easy to feed a family of that size. So my entry into the world was not planned; there were already three mouths to feed. This gave me great freedom when I was growing up because I could go out whenever I wanted - even at seven or eight years old. I found it very easy to get along with others and in no time at all I became friends with everyone. That was the beauty of life for me back then. Although, one of the first things I learnt as a child was that society is not the same for everyone. I discovered this the first time I came here, to Via Trieste. There was a family called the Stuarts, they were English and had a little girl of my age. I probably played some games with her and she invited me into her house. When I went in, I realised that we are not all the same. I stood there with my mouth wide open: antique furniture, vases, paintings... The feeling that I had was that this social distance had made it impossible for us to communicate with each other.

We were poor after the war and so my father and two brothers went to the former military bakery. They worked there and managed to get some food. It was there that my father met a Polish soldier whose wife was pregnant and, even though we had a small house, my father rented out a room to him. The story probably goes like this: my father rented out a room to him because they got to know each other, they spoke together and possibly this man told my father his problems. And then a baby boy was born. I have kept a photo of me with this little boy. I was three years old and I have a strange memory of that moment. I had never found myself in that situation before. I must have been really inexperienced and annoyed because I was constantly told to 'Lift up your head! Look at the camera!' In short, I just wanted to cry. In fact, you can see in the photo that my eyes are clouded. I felt sad inside and every time I look at that photo I have that same feeling. This is the only photo I have of myself as a child and I have looked at it many times, as if perhaps expecting something. I often ask myself, 'I wonder what happened to that little boy.' And now I will tell you about something incredible that happened a few years ago. Returning home I saw two people stood in my doorway; a very elderly woman with a middle-aged man. They were right in my doorway and looking through my windows and so I realised that these two people were waiting for me or a member of my family. The closer I got, the more I thought about that photo. I cannot explain it; telling you this sends shivers down my spine. I had not even got them to talk yet. The woman asked me, 'Doesn't anyone live here?' and I said, 'But you can't be...?' Why would a couple, a woman that old with a man of his age... I believe I stretched out my hands. 'It can't be!' I let them straight in and made them feel welcome. Then I fetched the photo and showed them where it had been taken. While I spoke with this grown man, the woman, curious, wandered around the house dismayed and said 'But it has all changed so much. I don't recognise anything.' So I took out the photo and showed her that the same armchair, where we two children had sat, was still in the house. I said to her, 'We were sat right here! Here!' Then they wanted to hear about my parents, about my father and mother who sadly have both passed away. After this we said goodbye. I do not know how long they stayed; actually, when I arrived home the sun had already set. Strange things happen in life: this is my point. Ultimately, what pleased me was realising that, from the way in which the lady spoke, my parents were so welcoming and such kind people and that they had always remained in the hearts of these people.