

## Preface: Why I Wrote This Book

Children live in a world of their own. Time passes in a different way. Reality and fantasy are often mixed up. There is no clear purpose in life except for enjoyment and pleasure. But there is also curiosity and mystery. As a child, I had a “secret castle,” which I am only now beginning to understand. It was awesome and yet attractive, good and yet evil. It made me think and feel strange energies.

A real but still “secret” exists somewhere in one of the most remote parts of Spain, in what used to be the ancient Kingdom of Aragon. I knew it was there, in the village of Mora de Rubielos, for I had seen it many times with my own eyes during my summer holidays. I knew it was painful to my mother and maternal grandparents, but it was something so distressing they were ashamed or afraid of telling me.

It was something they kept secret until I became an adolescent. But then, when I was finally allowed to visit the place “inside,” I started to find other secret symbols, and hidden energies in that very same castle, whose meaning and true purpose I am only just beginning to grasp at the age of 47. Feelings of “good” and “evil” were communicated to me and still are communicated whenever I visit the castle. I am not superstitious. By profession, I am a cancer physician and scientist; I certainly do not believe in “ghosts.” But often reality is even more rich and imaginative than fiction. Ghosts and “supernatural beings” can be considerably less interesting than some real human beings. This book will give many examples of this truth.

Neither my father nor my mother liked to talk about the history of our family. Their past and their childhood were taboo. As the eldest of their four children, I was more aware than my brothers and sister that this “conspiracy of silence” was because of something painful and terrible in their past. This silence increased my curiosity and my will to try to understand what really had happened to them. It gradually became evident that it had to do with our Spanish Civil War, which in many ways was a prelude to World War II.

When my father, for example, decided to leave Spain in 1963 for political reasons, and we moved to the city of Turin, in northern Italy, my life changed dramatically. I still remember vividly how, at six years of age, I saw the Alps from the train that was taking my family—including my mother, my sister, and my younger brother—to a new life, where my father was already waiting for us.

He had promised that although the weather was going to be colder and the days darker than in sunny Spain, we would enjoy something that was forbidden in Spain at the time. Something that was, according to him, the most important aspect of life, apart from health. What he referred to was *freedom*. My father said that in Italy one could speak without constraint about politics, religion, ideals, and being Catalan or Basque (among other things) without constraint, fearing nothing.

But what can a six-year-old boy say about that?

The excitement of my parents and the obvious stress this change brought to our lives, however, undoubtedly impinged upon my subconscious mind, and made me feel that *injustice* can, and often is, part of life. It is the dark side of things.

This feeling and an increasing awareness of human cruelty and evil were further enhanced and reinforced by a number of events in my childhood and early adolescence.

One of them was becoming close friends with my schoolmate at the Liceo Classico Massimo d'Azeglio in Turin. He is Renzo Levi, the only son of Primo Levi, a chemist and a writer who is now becoming increasingly well known outside Italian and Jewish cultural circles.

He survived Auschwitz, the Nazi concentration camp, and in 1946, after his liberation by the invading Russian troops, he wrote a wonderful but rather sad book entitled *If This Is a Man*. This book can be briefly summarized in a not-so-well-known poem, which he also wrote 1946, entitled "Shemá." I translated it from Italian into English as follows:

*You who live secure  
In your warm houses,  
You who find coming home in the evening  
Your food hot and friendly faces  
Consider if this is a man  
Who works in the mud  
Who doesn't know peace  
Who fights for a scrap of bread,  
Who dies for a yes or for a no.  
Consider if this is a woman,  
Without hair and without name,  
Without strength any more to remember,  
Her eyes empty and her womb cold  
Like a frog in the winter.  
Meditate that this has been:  
I commend these words to you.  
Carve them in your heart  
When at home, when on the roads,  
Going to bed, arising:  
Repeat them to your children  
Or may your house collapse  
May disease cripple you  
May your offspring turn their backs on you*  
—Primo Levi

I have little doubt that the events in my early life encouraged me to confront the evil side of human nature with courage, and to fight evil even of nonhuman nature. Hence, in 1974 at the age of 17, in London, I committed myself to a profession as both cancer researcher and cancer clinical doctor. Cancer shows the "malignant side of nature," the real and changing face of evil—being, as it still is, the origin of much human suffering and sorrow.

To better understand history and philosophy, I decided that besides reading as many relevant books as possible, I should gradually uncover the hidden past of my family, and the real nature and true "motors" of human history.

What I have learned is complex and will require both patience and motivation, as well as considerable parallel thinking and a certain level of cultural background, to follow and comprehend the various chapters of this book. Research has reinforced my intuitive

views that history is not linear, going from one event to another in an orderly fashion, but rather it is chaotic. Moreover, it is always relative, written by victors rather than by losers, and it is driven by passions rather than by rational arguments. The real forces that shape human history and our fate are so complex and unpredictable that it is hard not to perceive the interaction of supernatural forces, of good and evil, fighting each other like angels and demons, as they do in mythology, religions, and great works of art.

Not rarely in history unprecedented facts that seem at first to change significantly or even drastically the course of political, social, religious, and economic events of the world end up having little, or relatively little, impact on history. A fairly recent example of this could be, for example, the first human landings on the moon in the 1960s. They were, no doubt, the result and great achievement of technology and a natural ambition to reach even beyond our natural limits, but they have not as such changed our history. On the contrary, small events that often pass unnoticed to contemporaries or are not so widely publicized can some times have long-lasting consequences. For example, when Jesus was born in extreme poverty in the Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, few could have imagined the birth of a new religion and the subsequent development of Christianity.

I have also realized that civilization cannot be taken for granted. In the same way as life on earth has witnessed dramatic changes and several mass extinctions (for example, the dinosaurs that disappeared from our planet some 60 to 65 million years ago), human history is fraught with examples of great powers and civilizations that have also gone extinct: the ancient Egyptians, the Babilonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Mayas, the Aztecs, and many others. They all ruled large bits of land, created their own social and philosophical rules, their arts and sciences, their religions and beliefs, and yet all that can be found about them is ruins, inanimate objects, and translated texts. Empires too are shortlasting: In modern times we have witnessed the birth and death of the Spanish Empire and the British Empire, to give just two examples. Nothing is permanent. Nothing is absolute. Nothing is forever. The only constant feature is change.

The great events that shape the history of humanity are at the same time chaotic and irrational. Chaos theories are mathematical models developed to explain complex and often unpredictable events, like weather forecasts, traffic jams, turbulence phenomena, and stock exchange fluctuations. No models have yet been invented to explain history. If Leonardo da Vinci is right when he said that everything in nature, including the mountains or clouds, takes its shape from the forces that act upon it, then historians and political leaders should find out what forces act upon history. All I can conclude in this book is that irrational, as well as rational; forces are the essence of these forces that shape the destiny of nations and individuals.

Persevere with me as seemingly unconnected facts and characters are reviewed panoramically, in a bird's-eye-view sort of fashion, starting from true facts, people, and events I have had the fortune—or misfortune—to experience myself. These seemingly unconnected facts, in many ways, turned out to be connected. Not always as “cause” and “effect” but certainly influencing each other and changing human matters like politics, businesses, religions, philosophy, and science.

Some of the “protagonists” of this book are famous, including Winston Churchill, Rudolf Hess, and Adolph Hitler, or reasonably well known by experts, such as the Grand

Master of St. John, Don Juan Fernández de Heredia, or Sir Steven Runciman and Rudolf von Sebottendorf, or Ernst Bohle. Others are entirely unknown to most people, such as my own grandparents and ancestors.

I have based my research on visible and palpable facts, books, documents, and references that are reliable and established. But whenever facts and documents were missing, or it was clear they had been deliberately manipulated, I have been guided by friends with special knowledge or training and by a certain “compelling intuition.” Reason is a much more recent invention of nature than passions. This is why in *The Secret Castle*, the reader goes backward and forward in history although the “Logos” (in the full meaning of the word) is exactly the same all along the book. The Logos is the search for truth.

For example, to understand a little better the horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and modern times, I decided to start with myself and my own ancestors. It is by this method of investigation and by looking at proven facts and unproven facts with “diagnostic hypothesis,” that I move freely but not randomly from early Christianity to the Middle Ages, and from the Middle Ages to modern times.

In fact, in spite of considerable study and the help of patient and knowledgeable friends, I still do not have complete answers to all of the questions raised by the Secret Castle. Some of the questions first came to me on my personal visits to the place. But others have been inspired by the many symbols found in the castle, and by my fascination for the Grand Master of the Order of St. John, who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Surprisingly, I found that many of these ancient symbols were connected not only to prehistoric times in Europe, but also to more recent events, such as the birth and development of Nazi Germany.

Can anybody still believe that what happened in the past, even several centuries ago, is not relevant to the present? Can anybody still think that after what happened in New York on September 11, 2001, that what happens, for example, in Baghdad or in Afghanistan, is not relevant to what happens or can happen in New York, Madrid, or London?

I believe that history belongs to everybody who is keen to study it, because all of us are willing or unwilling protagonists of it. We are direct or indirect witnesses to it. It has also been said that history is written by the victors not by the losers. True facts, not just words, can be manipulated, hidden, or confused. The apparent absence of documents does not mean that certain things or events never took place. On the contrary: This absence often means that these things did exist, these events did take place, but that for obscure reasons their mere existence, or whatever evidence for it, had to be destroyed, denied, or suppressed.

There are certain matters that, whenever they can affect the stability of states and institutions, or jeopardize the privileges of the powerful, are better kept in the darkness forever. For that is precisely where they belong—to the darkness of the human spirit.

We read in the book of Genesis (2:15) that the Lord God took man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it, and said: “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”

The serpent (evil) said to the woman, Eve, “You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from this tree your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”...

Although, like for any single part of the Holy Scriptures, there can be several interpretations, it is out of question that the knowledge of good and evil is, according to the Bible, equivalent to “be like God.” We can deduce that this knowledge is not truly comprehensible to the human mind.

When Eve and Adam ate from this tree, God—in spite of His divine compassion and love for what He had created—became so upset that cursed his human creatures: “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground. Because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust shall return.”

Wisdom is an individual quest and a personal responsibility for every decent human being. The search for wisdom falls within the vast and complex subjects of religion and moral philosophy, or ethics. But truth is like “darkness visible,” serving only to express the gloom that rests on the prospect of futurity. It is that mysterious veil which the eye of human reason cannot penetrate, unless assisted by “light” from above.

One of my first modest academic contributions, while still a medical student at the University of Oxford, was a study in the laboratory of Sir David Weatherall, comparing the evolutionary relationships of human populations from an analysis of their DNA, eventually published in the prestigious scientific journal *Nature* (volume 319: 491–493, 1986). Our data were consistent with the hypothesis that modern humans—the species we call *Homo sapiens*—originated in sub-Saharan Africa as “recently” as 100,000 or 200,000 thousand years ago. Considering that life on earth probably originated some 3,5 to 4 thousand million years ago, or that dinosaurs became extinct some 60 million years ago, it is evident that humans are a recent species on planet Earth.

History as such, at least in written format, is an even more recent phenomenon—3,500 to 5,000 years ago, depending on exact criteria. But even modern history is not taught in the same way in different countries. Born in Spain, still during the long dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, I was brought up in Italy and educated at Cambridge and Oxford in England. I can assure the reader that my history books in those three countries were rather different. Even the same events were often explained from separate and distinct points of view.

I would like to invite the reader to follow closely this personal pilgrimage through history, but not as a person who travels to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion. Rather, I would like the critical reader to share with me the perplexity I felt for so many of the historical events and characters encountered. This book is a tourist guide to the “Unwritten History of the Losers” or to the “Hidden History of the Winners”.