

Prince Doria: the War Years and After

Prince Filippo was one of the few Italian aristocrats to make a stand against Mussolini - their palazzo in Rome city centre was the only building not to fly the Italian flag on Fascist holidays. Enraged Blackshirts stormed the palace, confronting Princess Mary in her apron, her hands covered in flour from making scones. When they asked where the Prince was, she replied, "I dunno where the Prince is!" in the Italian equivalent of a Cockney accent. Mistaking her for the cook, they smashed up the property, hung out their own flag and left.

The Prince meanwhile tried to warn King Victor Emmanuel III that if he stood firm against Mussolini he would have the country's support. The King refused to see him so the Prince wrote him a letter instead, which the King sent to Mussolini.

When Italy entered the war in 1940, the Prince was interned in a series of concentration camps, only to be released months later through ill health. Not knowing whom they could trust, the family were wary of friendships. Their grandson Prince Jonathan has discovered there is a whole file on his family in the police records in Rome. When he looked at it in 2000 he discovered informants' letters spying on his grandparents and speculating on their political position.

When the Germans invaded Italy in 1943 the family went into hiding. One terrifying night the Gestapo arrived at the 150 room apartment palace searching for them but the family were able to escape. The Prince, disguised as a priest, lay low with friends in the Trastevere district of Rome. With the Vatican's Irish Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, he worked for the Resistance, smuggling escaped PoWs out of Italy. Years later their exploits were made into a film "The Scarlet and the Black" with Gregory Peck as the Monsignor. "Not a very convincing account" shrugs Prince Jonathan "but the Prince in the film was meant to be my grandfather". Though his wartime experiences had ruined Prince Filippo's health, he was made Mayor of Rome after the war.

Princess Orietta met a young sub-lieutenant Frank Pogson, while she was working as a volunteer in a forces' canteen in the port of Ancona. They corresponded for 14 years before marrying in 1958, after the Prince's death. Frank took the name Doria Pamphilj, which would have died out otherwise and the couple were happily married for 40 years. Sadly they were unable to have children so they adopted Jonathan in 1963, shortly followed by Mary, who now has the imposing title of Princess Gesine Margaret Orietta Mary Floridi.

Orietta's husband Frank died in 1998 and she died of cancer two years later at the age of 78. Just a month before she died, she received the OBE from the Queen on her state visit to Italy in 2000.

Princess Gesine and Prince Jonathan shared equally in their mother's inheritance. She now lives with her husband Massimiliano and their two young daughters in Genoa, running the family's estate there.