

VINCENT MASSARI
Pueblo, Colorado
Tape No. I-35

An Interview By
Phil Notarianni and Joe Stipanovich
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THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH VINCENT MASSARI ON SEPTEMBER 14, 1974 IN PUEBLO, COLORADO CONDUCTED BY PHIL NOTARIANNI AND JOE STIPANOVICH.

PN: Mr. Massari, when and where were you born, sir?

VM: I was born in Lucanemarsi. Do you want me to speak in Italian or English?

PN: Why don't we do it in English. It will be easier for the typist.

VM: I was born in Lucanemarsi, province Aquila, Abruzzi, in November 29, 1898.

PN: And what did your father do there?

VM: In Italy my father worked underground all his life building tunnels for railroads all over Europe before he came to the United States.

PN: Where did he work besides Italy? Did he work in Germany?

VM: He worked in Greece, Germany, France. He worked anyplace where they were to build tunnels for railroads. So when he came here he couldn't work no place else except underground.

PN: So he worked underground all his life?

VM: All his life, yeah.

PN: Did he work for specific companies?

VM: Well, here in the United States he worked for Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, Victor Fuel, and some independent coal mine companies also.

PN: How about in Europe; did he work for the--?

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VM: Well, mostly for the government.

PN: The government?

VM: Because the railroads were controlled even then by the government, and in Greece and Germany also.

PN: Did anyone in your family do any farming?

VM: My grandfather.

PN: Your grandfather; did he own his own land?

VM: Yes, he owned his own land, and he also farmed some land that belonged to Prince Peronia who owned the lake of Fucino, you know. There was a dry by him back in 1860, and then he leased the land to all the farmers around him.

PN: Was this also in Lucanemarsi?

VM: Lucanemarsi. They called it sailor town. It used to be one of the largest lakes in Italy.

PN: What kind of products did he grow--fruits and vegetables?

VM: Well, no, mostly it was beets or wheat, or beans with large farms. Never produced the small one. Farming to resell beets or potatoes bought mostly by Germany to use as a replant.

PN: I see. So he sold them to Germany.

VM: Well, not only him--most of the farmers in my own time.

PN: When was your father born?

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VM: Well, you got me there! I think I got that same place, but I just--

PN: How about--was he also born in--?

VM: In Luco.

PN: In Luco, and how about your mother?

VM: Now, my mother was born in Peschi, province Campobasso. My father happened to be working in Carpinona where they build the railroad for Sermona to Naples, so he met my mother there where he work in Carpinona and married her there and brought back in Italy, Luco. And when he left for the United States he left her there because his family was there.

PN: Was he ever involved in any political capacities back in Italy? Did he serve as a mayor?

VM: He was already mixed up with the labor unions.

PN: He was involved with labor unions.

VM: Yeah, Confederazione Generale Dol Lavoro which covers all kinds of workers. He was always active in Italy and United States.

PN: Was he involved in any strikes there in Italy?

VM: A few.

PN: Can you remember any particular one--

VM: No, I don't.

PN: --that he told you about?

VM: Yeah, he told me about several strikes.

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PN: What did he say about--?

VM: Lasted only a few days, you know.

PN: They were just like the ones they have now where they call them for two days or three days?

VM: Well, mostly about a week or ten days, but they got what they were looking for.

PN: And what was that? What conditions or what kind of benefits were they looking for?

VM: Well, they were looking for a raise in pay. They start working for two liras a day, and they get five.

PN: How about their working hours and their working conditions?

VM: Their working conditions, yeah. They striking for the eight hours. They used to work from nine in the morning to nine in the evening.

PN: Was he ever involved with any of the socialist activities in Italy, socialist labor?

VM: Well, the socialist labor movement, most of the unions were more or less indirectly controlled by the Socialist Party. See Confederazione Generale Del Lavoro was more or less controlled by the Socialist, but you see this political activities plus labor activities. So the union took part because never had an opportunity to take part moving from one town to another.

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PN: So he was more involved in the labor aspect of it, right, opposed to political.

VM: Well, indirectly they were also mixed up with the political movement. I was in my young days.

PN: We will get into that later when we start talking about--. Did this pose any problems to your father when he came to this country and get involved in labor--the fact that he was involved with the unions in Italy?

VM: No, in fact I'm surprised. They were more tolerant in those days than they are today.

PN: Okay, let's backtrack a bit. When did he come to the United States and why?

VM: Well, he came to improve his conditions in 1897.

PN: Did he ever relate to you the fact that there might have been labor agents or immigration posters in Italy that advertised that America, especially in the west, the railroads were starting to--

VM: They were, but I don't think he got influenced by that. They got influenced by someone from the same town going back to Italy for a visit to the family and telling them about the conditions in the United States. I had here two other brothers in the United States, and no one stayed in Colorado.

PN: Oh, you've got brothers in the United States?

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VM: Yes. One was in Brooklyn and never moved until he went back to Italy. The other one travelled all over the United States from Alaska down, and he stayed along here.

PN: So your father came here in 1897?

VM: Yeah.

PN: Did he travel on the steamship third class?

VM: Uh huh.

PN: Can you remember?

VM: It was third class.

PN: Or was it steerage?

VM: Yes, it was steerage like mine.

PN: He came back steerage, huh?

VM: That's right.

PN: Did he ever tell you about any of the conditions on the ship that he saw?

VM: Oh, yes. He told us about them poor tradesmen, poor foods, but they never complaining because they were hoping to get here and get better.

JS: And it was Italian shipping line?

PN: Can you remember the name of the ship?

VM: No, not his. I remember mine, but I don't remember his. I don't think he remembers after many years.

PN: What about Ellis Island. Did he tell you anything about Ellis Island?

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VM: Well, he went through the third degree like everybody else.

PN: Did they check him to see if he had like twenty or twenty-five dollars in his pocket?

VM: Well, he had to have a certain amount of money.

PN: I guess they gave him a full physical examination and everything? What did he say about his treatment there, how he was treated?

VM: Oh, they push them around when they get the bunch all together. They ask him a lot of questions. One thing he was lucky; he didn't need to be able to read and write otherwise they'd send him back if he couldn't read and write, and he learned it after he came to the United States.

JS: Did they ask him if he was a socialist at Ellis Island?

VM: No, not in those days because most of those farmers even if they were socialist they didn't know too much about the Socialist Party. That was the time of Turati and Modigliani and all those other leaders were members of the Italian Parliament, but the farmers were only interested in the conditions of the union more than the political party, father and the American officials.

JS: How did the Italians coming into America look upon

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those Italian people who were serving as interpreters? Were they suspicious of them?

VM: No, not necessarily. The only thing that they were a little bit reluctant to deal with those who represent some bankers or corporation because more or less they had a percentage when they bring so many workers. My father never had any contact with that.

PN: Did he ever mention anyone or anyone individual or group of individuals that might have been Padroni? Did he mention that?

VM: Padroni, well, no, because he didn't work in the farm or small places where they got three or four working. He working only for large corporations.

PN: Well, did these large corporations have anyone that contracted labor?

VM: No, not necessarily. They do have the people go to New York to contract some immigrants and bring them over here.

PN: Okay, that's something that I wasn't sure of because in my research in Castlegate in Utah I was noticing from the paper reports that there were like twenty to twenty-five to thirty, sometimes as much as fifty Italians coming in, and I thought maybe there might have been an agent for the Pleasant Valley Coal Company or the Utah Fuel Company over there saying,

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"Come to Utah to work in the mines."

VM: Some mines did use it down in Trinidad. They use a banker by the name of Aiello.

PN: Aiello.

VM: Which bank busted after I came here in the United States because he didn't have that opportunity anymore to go to New York and hire working people for so much apiece although a lot of coal miners lost their money because they trusted them. And the only Italian bank still prosperous is the International State Bank in Raton, New Mexico. Joe Delicio the owner--now Joe Delicio worked in the mines too. Now, one of the funny things that Joe Delicio came to my home town in Italy to play with the band from his own town.

PN: Oh, yeah!

VM: He was doing the same thing. He's a great man; one guy never took advantage of the coal miners because he was a coal miner himself. He knew what he meant.

PN: Your father then came to--he came straight to Colorado?

VM: Straight to Colorado.

PN: And where did he first settle?

VM: Well, down in Los Animas County. He worked every single moment that they were there.

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PN: And what did he for--?

VM: Dig up coal.

PN: He was a mucker. What would call that?

JS: Yeah, mucker. Did he shovel the coal?

VM: Pick it and shovel. Yeah, they used to--they got paid by how many cars what they load.

PN: Did he ever tell you of any abuses about the company weighing the coal incorrectly?

VM: Oh, well, they done that in my time. I worked in the mines where they do things like that.

JS: Now, the mines were very unsafe when he first started working.

VM: And how. He got hurt a couple of times, but not too much.

JS: Well, was there a problem: gas, dust or both?

VM: Gas, dust, everything.

PN: What about the timbering down below?

VM: Well, that's one thing about you had to take care of your own, and my father would take care of that before you dig up an ounce of coal even in my time. That why I still see--

PN: So if you began working around 1897--when did he start getting involved with union?

VM: Right away.

PN: Right away.

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VM: Right away.

PN: He joined the UMW right away?

VM: No.

JS: UMW came in 19--

VM: United Mine Workers, yeah, strike back in 1898.

PN: Did he tell you about that strike his own personal experience? What did he say about it?

VM: Well, what could he say. He had to fight like everybody else, and he was always in the black list. Like the strike in 1914 when he couldn't get the job anymore from Fuel and Iron until three years after. He had to work for small coal companies at all the abuses, were those who scabbed got a good place to work and load the coal very easy. Had to work in one of those places where it was hard to dig up coal. He don't want anybody to say that he was unable to carry that place.

PN: Did he ever tell you who any of the Italian organizers were?

VM: Well, I think the--yeah, Demolli was one down here.

PN: Demolli was early because he came over from Italy in 1895.

VM: Yes, I know, but he was still here during those years.

PN: Which years?

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VM: Well, I think he was here in 1906.

PN: Well, see in 1904, I lose track of him because he is convicted on that charge on that federal offense. And then I think he goes back to Kansas, and then someone says he was in California, and I can't follow it after that.

VM: They moved the newspapers to Pittsburgh, Kansas. And Cafaro started to be editor of the papers. He was a professor of the Turin University. Why he came in the United States I don't know?

PN: Your speaking of--?

VM: Cafaro.

PN: Il Lavoratore?

VM: Il Lavoratore Italiano, Lavoratore Italiano.

PN: So it was moved from Trinidad to--?

VM: Because they made it hard, you know. All the guards and the stooges for the coal company, they made it hard. They destroyed the printing shop two or three times.

PN: Do you know where any of those back copies, let's say 1900 to 1904 period, might be?

VM: No.

PN: Because I can't find them up in Denver.

VM: No, I think it might be in the copies I give it to the colleges of these couple of copies of the

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Lavoratore also the several other newspaper like the Il Risveglio of Denver. Isra ---?--- was also in the union paper, you know, Frank Mancini; he dedicated a lot of his pages to the strikes, miners, and so on.

PN: What do you know about Charles Demolli that you might relate to me? I'm really interested in him, and there is not much written about him.

VM: No, really I don't know too much because Pilatte was a guy that I talked back a few years ago many, many times. He used to relate me--

PN: Now, what was his name again?

VM: Henry Pilatte.

PN: Pilatte.

VM: Pilatte. Now, when he died there was an article on the newspaper in Italy. I don't know how they got it, telling all about him.

PN: Do you remember which newspaper it was?

VM: No, I don't. I don't because I used to receive several.

PN: Did your father ever relate to you any stories about Charles DeMolli. Did he know Charles DeMolli?

VM: Yeah, he knew he was very active, and he was honest, and he fought for the miner's cause.

PN: Do you happen to know why he was--why he was eventually taken out of the United Mine Workers?

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VM: Well, because he was too radical.

PN: Too radical?

VM: For the United Mine Workers. He was too radical. I got the same experience here in Pueblo. When the first strike they had here in the steel mill, I made a speech to the Italian steel workers outside, and one of those preachers barely understood Italian and said I was too radical, so they never called me again.

PN: Now, when was this, 1921 you said?

VM: Just around that time.

PN: And what was the context of your speech to those people?

VM: Why they were abuse, why the pay was so low, why they had to work twelve hours a day. Ten and twelve. I worked at twelve hours for \$1.75 a day.

PN: And this was for Colorado Fuel and Iron?

VM: For the steel workers which belong to Colorado Fuel and Iron.

JS: Was that during the national steel strike?

VM: No, that was long before when Charlie Grose was a president of the Colorado Federation of Labor--no organization whatsoever. They got the steel workers together, and they were all induced to go but didn't because there wasn't no help financially or

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otherwise. So the strike don't last long, and they never got anything until Roosevelt got into the pictures, and they got everything they wanted. And some of those were even--stooges for fuel and iron became leaders for the union.

PN: Let's back up a bit and get into this a little bit more. You came into this country in 1915?

VM: January, 1915.

PN: And you were sent for by your father. Did he send for you?

VM: My mother came in Italy, pick me up, otherwise--

PN: Did your mother--this is the question I wanted to ask you. Did your mother come with your father?

VM: No, no. He sent for her later. He sent--he tried to get her here long, long before, but she won't leave me alone by myself in Italy. So she waited and waited. Finally he said, "If he doesn't want to come, you come." They left me in college. So they left me at the seminary, and I didn't want to come.

PN: Which seminary were you in?

VM: Penne.

PN: Penne?

VM: Yes, that's the province of Pescara today. It was terrible then.

PN: How many years did you go there?

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VM: Three.

JS: Three years. Was that for a particular order like Benedictines or Dominicans?

VM: No, it was a regular priest, bishop seminary. Although if I had gone to some of those orders I could have learned probably more.

PN: So you were telling us prior to the interview that your mother sent for you, or came back to Italy to get you?

VM: Came back without even writing me.

PN: Because of the war situation.

VM: Well, when Italy was--war. Italy didn't go to war until May, 1915, but Europe was already in war since August 1913-14. So she knew and my mother and father knew that unless I get here in the United States soon I would never be able to. In fact, if I would have waited till May when Italy went to war, I wouldn't be here.

PN: You would have been gone.

VM: And my--in my ship there were all women anyway and about half dozen men. Three or four they were coming back after visiting.

PN: What can you remember about your trip from Italy? Did you leave from Naples too?

VM: From Naples.

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PN: And what was the name of your ship?

VM: Tormina.

PN: Tormina?

VM: I still got the picture.

PN: Oh, yeah!

VM: Yeah.

PN: Did you also arrive steerage or ride steerage?

VM: Well, what they call third class, you know. I could sleep anywhere because the section, the main section was only twelve so we could sleep anywhere, but there was nothing special.

PN: They didn't give you a cabin or anything?

VM: No, no, there wasn't any.

PN: What were the conditions like as you remember them?

VM: Well, they gave us plenty to eat. That's all, and so I didn't complain too much.

PN: Were there quite a few of Italians with you on that?

VM: They were all Italians.

PN: They were all?

VM: Well, the women coming to the United States to join their husbands or children, or three or four were coming back after visiting Italy.

PN: Did they have any--sausage?

VM: I don't think I ever went to sleep anyway because we were walking back and forth all night.

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PN: Did a lot of them bring different things with them from Italy? Well, I'm speaking specifically of food products like capocola, soprasatta.

VM: No, nothing.

PN: Wine or anything?

VM: No, nothing in those days. No, they probably brought an extra suit of clothes and a few extra shirts and things like that. They know that there was plenty to eat and not what you like to eat, but there was plenty to eat, you know, in the boat. That's why nobody ever complained.

PN: What did you bring with you? Did you bring many articles of clothing?

VM: No, I always regret in the name of God the books that I wanted with me because my mother says, "Oh, in a little more years we will come back anyway, in three or four years."

PN: Oh, she was expecting to come back then?

VM: Oh, yes, my daddy too. He was expecting, you know, He build a home when my mother was there. Never saw that home and the earthquake destroyed in 1915. See, the earthquake destroyed my own town and many times around in the province while I was on the boat. Over twenty-one thousand were killed. So when I went back in 1957 I didn't find nothing.

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PN: Let's see my father and mother were born in La Provincia di Casenza.

VM: Calabria. Yeah, there were a lot of Calabrese here in the old days. There was on the newspaper here by IL Vindice by Michele Jachetta. He was from Grimaldi. We had two papers here.

PN: What were they entitled? What were their names?

VM: IL Vindice.

PN: Il Vindice. And what was the other one?

VM: Well, the other one was my Il Unione.

PN: They were both started by--?

VM: No, no. The Il Unione was established by Piemontese from Tovino, Caglione. There was a friction between the two.

PN: Is there a lot of regional controversies here among the Italians? Let's say from--well, let's say from Calabria and Piemonte?

VM: Well, groups thought that they were better than the others. Once in a while, you know, there was a little friction, but nothing--

PN: What about in their lodges when they started their mutual aid societies. Did you have those that were Northern Italians and those lodges that were primarily Southern Italians?

VM: There weren't too many North Italians in Pueblo. So

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they all belonged to the Fedelta which cover everyone except the Sicilians, and the Sicilians had their own.

PN: What was that one?

VM: Indipendents Siciliano. Then they joined the Columbus Lodge and they made it all one. They used to call them Cristoforo Columbo Indipendente Siciliano, and they cut the Indipendente Siciliano about three or four years ago.

PN: Cristiforo Colombo.

VM: Then the Calabresi started the Productive Beneficenza which is our Lodge 222 now of the Columbian Federation and Majachetta was president for several years. Now Caglione, the Piemontes who started the paper here was president of the Christopher Columbus Lodge, the oldest lodge in Pueblo.

PN: And that was established when?

VM: It was established in 1890.

PN: Wow! Now the Columbian Federation was established as I recall from your article, 1893 when I think it was the lodge up in Hurley, Wisconsin.

VM: Yeah, Hurley.

PN: Hurley got everyone together an--Columbian Federation. When did you first get involved with that Federation?

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VM: Well, I got involved pretty near--right away because our paper was the official mouthpiece of the organization. So when I used to write I had to know what was going on.

PN: And you started writing for the paper when, in 1921?

VM: No, in 1917.

PN: In 1917 you were a reporter?

VM: I was only a writer for the paper that time. I was working now in 1921 after the flood, then I became part owner, half owner because the flood destroyed our machines, destroyed everything. We had to start all over again to build up. So I became--I bought half interest, and when Caglione left for California in 1925 I bought the other half, and then I became a full owner.

PN: How many people did you have working for you at that time? Was it a successful newspaper?

VM: Very successful.

PN: How many?

VM: We had a circulation all over the United States, but during Mussolini's time we lost quite a few subscribers because we were against Fascists strong. One of the first papers to be suppressed in Italy.

PN: Oh, yeah.

VM: Among three other papers in Italy.

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PN: So you were enjoying overseas readers as well as--?

VM: Oh, yeah. Quite a few in Italy, yes. We lost about three thousand subscribers under Mussolini because when the paper was suppressed we couldn't mail them anymore.

PN: Did Mussolini ever come out and make any statement about your paper?

VM: No, not Mussolini himself, but some of the leaders. Well, the secretary of Fascisti Al' Estoro, which means outside of Italy, he wrote a letter, an article in La Giorinezza, the Fascist paper in New York that I was wrong trying to persuade me of everything. So I gave them a nice answer that he was wrong and not me.

PN: And was this published in your paper? This was an editorial comment?

VM: That's right. Yeah, well, it didn't surprise me, but some of our people thought that I was talking, writing against Italy, you know. They couldn't see the difference between fascism and some of--. Even local people said, "What's the matter with Vincent? Is he acting nuts writing against Mussolini?"

PN: What was your own personal opinion if you might just give me a very brief--about Mussolini, yes?

VM: Mussolini? A plain renegade.

PN: And the Fascists?

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VM: Just a plain renegade. I used to read his paper when I was in Rome. Avanti, he was the leader of Avanti when he was a socialist.

PN: What about the whole Fascist movement?

VM: Was rotten.

PN: Why?

VM: Why? Because there was no principle. All the lowdown, all the criminals in Italy join the Fascist party. That's the first thing they got. And in my home town there were from house to house people who used to receive papers to see whether they kept the papers somewhere.

PN: So you don't think he did much for Italy at all?

VM: Oh, hell! He ruined it.

PN: Even though he made the trains run on time?

VM: Oh, yes. That's the only credit he can get.

PN: What is your evaluation of his attempt of trying to unite the country a little bit, the North and the South?

VM: Who, Mussolini?

PN: Yeah.

VM: He hasn't gotten that credit either. He got the credit of trying to destroy the Mafia in Sicily, was strong around Fascism than it is today. All the criminals were protected by Fascists. I know from my

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own experience in my own town, in province.

PN: How were they protected? By law?

VM: Yeah, the Caribiniari, they turned around the other way when they would commit the crime.

PN: Was this because of bribery or what?

VM: Well, both.

PN: Because Caribiniari were quite strong, weren't they?

VM: Yeah, they were quite strong, but under Mussolini were under Fascist and the the Fascist guard. You see, all Matteotti and many others; and Don Monzoni, he was a Catholic priest.

PN: Was there much made of Matteotti here in this area?

VM: Oh, yes. He changed quite a lot of people.

PN: So that incident had an impact on--

VM: Oh, absolutely. In fact, we were disappointed that the socialist, you know, they went retire themselves in Aventine instead of active. Mussolini was afraid like hell in those days, but then they gave him a chance for him to come back again.

PN: Just the record on our tape and for Joe, why don't you tell him about the incident involving Matteotti so that we can have it on the record?

VM: Well, what do you want to know about it?

PN: Well, you know the incident in which he was killed?

VM: Well, he was killed after he delivered a speech in

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Parliament criticizing the Fascist party and denouncing of all the crimes that were committed up to then.

JS: When was that? What year was that, in the twenties?

VM: Well, exactly--1924. That's when he really read his speech in the Italian Parliament, and after that the Fascists got him. They killed him, and they buried him on open ground. La Sadrone and Mussolini made a statement that the worst enemy would have done things like that. He said that they were his own personal friends including Dumini. He used Dumini only for that particular instance anyway.

PN: Did an editorial appear in your paper about that incident?

VM: It sure did.

PN: Did you write it?

VM: Yes sir.

PN: And what did you say about it?

VM: Well, I can hardly remember the words, but I said plenty. Even the Italian embassy tried to get me through the post office so I would lose the third class privilege.

PN: Huh! But they weren't successful?

VM: No, they weren't successful. In fact, after Mussolini declared war on the United States the FBI were here

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every day trying to find out something about. I said,
"That's your responsibility now."

PN: Were you a citizen at that time, a U.S. Citizen?

VM: Let'e see, 1924, yeah. See, it takes five years to
become a citizen. Well, I had a little bad time then
too.

PN: Why don't you tell me about that?

VM: Some of the Fascists here in Pueblo they denounced me
as I'm the American, and in those days the attorney
general was the one who asked you the questions and
the judge. The U.S. judge, Judge Simmons at the time,
he was very harsh, especially with bootleggers, and
it so happened that quite a few of our people were
bootleggers, see. So he didn't look at our people to
favorable, but right then after I asked him so many
questiona, and I answered every darn one. He wants
delay and then for another interview, probably three
months or a year after that; and that's one time the
judge says, "I think you can become a citizen. Go
give your oath," because he asked me a lot of
questions, you see, about--

PN: Did he ever try to trick you into any answers that--?

VM: The attorney general tried to.

PN: What kind of questions were they? Can you remember?

VM: Well, questions that were not connected with

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citizenship of any kind.

PN: Can you remember any one specifically?

VM: Sure. If I was a member of the Socialist Party or Communist; If I had done something to hurt the United States.

PN: Did he ask you if you were a member of the Socialist Party in Italy before you came?

VM: No, no. He asked me if I was a member then here in the United States. And, well, he asked me a lot of silly questions. It's hard to remember now.

PN: Did he ask you if you were a member of the union, any labor union?

VM: Well, no. They never ask you those. I was a member. I was organizer for the National Union Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.

PN: Oh, yeah.

VM: Sure, we had the smelters here. I was even secretary for them a couple of years.

PN: Well, see that was the--that used to be the old Western Federation of Miners. Why don't you tell me a little about your union?

VM: I know Mr. Charles Moyer real well.

PN: Moyer, do you?

VM: Yes, he was president at the time.

PN: Sure.

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VM: And Ernest Mills was the secretary.

PN: Moyer, yeah.

VM: Yeah, I worked for fifty dollars a month.

PN: Oh, when did you become affiliated with the Western-?

VM: Oh, I--1921.

PN: Well, after 1916 they became international--Mine, Mill and Smelters Workers.

VM: Well, about--I think about 1919 as far as a member and then finally I became an organizer and the secretary of the local here, 23. I was there--first one to subscribe her stock over twenty dollars for the labor temple. Pueblo had a big labor temple where all the union used to make--they were more organized, more united than they are today. Now everyone push for their own benefits.

PN: What about the United Mine Workers?

VM: Well, the United Mine Workers used to have an office here in Pueblo and Felix Pogliano was district secretary.

PN: Did you ever belong to the United Mine Workers?

VM: Oh, yes, yes.

PN: So you belonged to both the unions?

VM: Well, I used to belong to United, and then I transferred to International Unions. At that time Oreste Nigro, or Nigro was president. Felix Pogliano

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was secretary of the United Mine Workers in Pueblo.

Pogliano died in Denver about three years ago.

PN: Do you ever have any contact with the Italian American Labor Council?

VM: In New York?

PN: Yeah.

VM: Oh, yeah. Yes, yes, all those leaders.

PN: Was Luigi Antonini president.

VM: Antonini. Well, let's see, I sent the file to Clemente in Chicago, editor of La Parola. You're always going to use for something. He asked me to send him a letter from Carlo Tresca. I sent him a letter from Carlo Tresca.

PN: Oh, you corresponded with Carlo Tresca?

VM: Oh, we were good friends. He is from the same province I come, you know.

PN: Okay,. let's, wow! What can you tell me about him personally?

VM: Well, he was very aggressive. He was honest in his beliefs. He fought for what he believed, and he was killed by a Fascist. Although we never proved who done it, but we know he was in Pueblo to visit me.

PN: How do you know he was killed by a Fascist? What is it that makes you believe that?

VM: Well, that's the general belief that we had.

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PN: Is there some evidence? Was he getting threats or something?

VM: Right along. The only thing he was a man of great courage. He was connected with several strikes; he used to be with the IWW. He used to print, he used to publish L'Auvenire and then in Il Martello.

PN: How about Arturo Giovannitti? Did you ever correspond with him?

VM: I send those letters also to him, but I told him I wanted those letters back in Chicago.

PN: See, back in Minnesota last year I prepared the collection of Onorio Ruotolo.

VM: Oh, yes. I know him too.

PN: And there were a lot of letters from Giovannitti because back in 1915 Onorio Ruotolo and Arturo Giovannitti started a magazine called Il Fueco.

VM: Yeah, I remember that.

PN: So you corresponded with Giovannitti?

VM: More with Carlo Tresca.

PN: And more with Carlo Tresca.

VM: Giovannitti wrote me a couple of years before he died.

PN: Where are all those letters that you have?

VM: Well, I sent those to ---?--- in Chicago.

PN: And he still has them?

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VM: Oh, yeah. He must have them because he is going to use them in the next issue of the paper.

PN: What about your letters with Arturo Giovannitti?

VM: Well, I sent them both, and they answered my letters, but I told them, "I want that back."

PN: Because if you would be willing--you wanted to keep the originals, but if we could have a copy I could come back sometime and make a copy because we don't have that much correspondence.

VM: Well, Clemente is going to make a copy and send me back the original.

PN: So he'll have a copy.

VM: Clemente worked here too as a printer for my paper.

PN: Oh, so that's how come you--because I notice you do a lot of writing for La Parola.

VM: Well, I used to do more than I do now.

PN: To backtrack a bit, when you first came here then you went right to work for Colorado Fuel and Iron?

VM: I went to work with my father in the coal mine after the strike.

PN: And how much were you receiving a day?

VM: It was a contract they pay you so much a ton. One month we both worked and got thirty dollars out.

PN: A ton. When you were digging this coal--

VM: Use to steal a lot.

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PN: Did you have to put a tag on the coal car when it went up?

VM: Oh, yeah, a number.

PN: Did you ever find anybody taking your tag off up above and putting another tag on it?

VM: No, not in my time because they don't give you not even third of what you load in a car anyway. You have to take whatever they give you. You couldn't prove otherwise until the union put the check women, you know, to check. Old cars in those days they give you anything. That's why I told my father, "I don't mind working in the mine, but not at this condition."

PN: So then you became somewhat--

VM: Well, I wrote my first--

PN: --sensitive about the labor situation.

VM: Well, I wrote my first article in 1915 in Risveglio.

PN: Anti-company?

VM: Every week.

PN: What, did you have a specific--?

VM: Oh, yes. I used to go to the--

PN: What was the name of your article? What was the name of your column?

VM: Well, that wasn't column. That was particular every week. Probably was different title, but always report what was going on in the coal mines, and there was--

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Jim Pereta was a guard for CF&I, and sometimes I didn't sign my name. See, I put something else underneath of that, and he asked my father once, "Somebody's writing against CF&I." He says, "You know who it is?"

PN: Can you remember what names you used?

VM: Well--

PN: Did you use--?

VM: That's on the papers I gave to the college. I never used the same name because I didn't want to give anyone or man a chance.

PN: Were they Italian names you used or English?

VM: No, it was an Italian name, and I write in Italian anyway. The paper was Italian. Couldn't write any other way. See, whatever I learned in English I stole it, and the knowledge of the Latin helped me learn it that little English I know because I never had one day of school when I came to the United States. In Italy they gave me Latin, Greek, French, Italian. That's all, and the language I need the most I didn't know, and I had a tough time. It's a good thing in those days when I was organizing the unions the majority of the members were Italians anyway, and up to a few years ago that's all I had here, Italians.

PN: I notice this is kind of a difficult question to

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answer, but about how many Italian miners were there here around 1915 in the Pueblo area?

VM: Well, in the Pueblo area were no miners, see, because the miners rode down Walsenburg, Trinidad, Fremont.

PN: Right, okay.

VM: Fremont so on. Now, the Fremont County were mostly North Italians, Piemontese, and there were a lot of large mines. Rockville was the largest one.

PN: What about down in the Trinidad?

VM: Down in the Trinidad? They had over six thousand.

PN: Then what about Leadville?

VM: Well, Leadville is no coal mine.

PN: Just what, silver?

VM: Silver, mostly Tyrolese, and there were quite a few of them. That's why my paper circulated all over the United States, especially in the coal mines or cedarwork.

PN: This is a little bit earlier, but it--and I can't find much about this man either. His name is Mose Paggi. Does that name ring a bell? He was over in Utah. He wrote a labor newspaper called Il Minatore.

VM: Il Minatore was in Calumet.

PN: Well, he wrote--this was in 1910, and then I lost track of it after 1910, but I don't know anything about the man. Did you ever run into a man by the

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name Paggi?

VM: Paggi? I've heard of him, but I don't think I had much--but Il Minatore was in Calumet, Michigan in my time.

PN: I wonder if it was moved?

VM: Could be.

PN: Who was the owner of that paper up there, Mr. Massari? Do you remember--Il Minatore?

VM: No, I don't. I have a copy of every single paper in the United States in my collection that I give my college.

PN: Oh, wow! Where was that collection housed?

VM: Southern Colorado State College.

PN: At the library there?

VM: Yeah, they will be at the library there, but they expect to enlarge and put them in a special place where you can find them anytime, but people of there and also the clippings. I gave them about forty-five, forty volumes of clippings everyone stick this way.

[INTERRUPTION]

PN: Mr. Massari, what can you tell me about the Italian consuls that were in Denver. To begin with Cuneo and then later, what was his first name? Pasquale Corte?

VM: Pasquale.

PN: Pasquale Corte.

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VM: Pasquale Corte was a very prominent family.

PN: You mean Corte or Cuneo?

VM: Corte. Corte. No, Cuneo was pretty good. Corte thought that he was too big to deal with us working people coming from Italy to--

PN: Where was he from?

VM: From Torino. He was the only one from Piemonte. Cuneo was decent fellow, and then after doing Fascist no one was any good until we got one after Mussolini was hanged, and he started good relations with me finally. He came and visited me ---?--- apologies.

PN: Who was that?

VM: Right now his name is--

PN: What did you know about Cuneo because I have ---?--- in my studies with the labor strike in 1903 in Utah. From what I can read in the papers Cuneo didn't give the working men very much support.

VM: Well, none of the consuls ever give us working men any support. Cuneo was not different from all the rest.

PN: Why?

VM: Well, I don't understand why because ---?--- representing the Italian government. They thought that these people, especially Italian miners who were on strike were more or less those who came from maybe

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socialistic ideas, and quite a few there were still ideas that they brought from Italy, especially old-timers. So they never got together with the consuls. One thing that happens to me, you know, I'm Notary Public, and I prepare some of the documents Procuri and others send to Italy which requires the signature of the consul. Well, one of the consuls refused to sign my documents because I was opposed to Fascism, and unless I changed he'll never sign again. So I had to go through a different process. I had to get the Secretary of State of Colorado to acknowledge my signature, Notary Public signature, and then send it to Secretary of State in Washington, Cordell Hall, who signed my documents before I could send to Italy so that took a long process. Then Italian line steamship line, they cut me off as agent, and I had to send the tickets back. I couldn't sell another Italian ticket during Mussolini's time. They persecuted me very badly, but they didn't change my mind.

PN: Well, then you were involved with this travel agency when?

VM: Right along. The travel agency and the newspaper been together since 1893 in the old days. See, it used to belong to Gagliana.

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PN: Sure.

VM: So when I bought the paper I bought everything. In the old days we used to sell railroad tickets and steamship until the airline come into the picture. Now we sell mostly airlines, very little steamship and railroad. So that was part of our income.

JS: Excuse me. In the old days when the people would buy steamship tickets to go back to Italy for a visit would they always pay for the ticket in one payment, or would they sometimes make several payments before they actually left?

VM: No, they used to pay cash lump sum except to some they say, "Well, can I pay you when I come back?" or, "Can I pay you in a couple of installments?" That was our responsibility, but the steamship company wouldn't accept that.

PN: Sure.

VM: See, it was our own. We took a chance ourselves, but when you could go to Italy for \$45 from New York in those days, you know--although \$45 was a lot.

PN: Was a lot of money.

VM: Was a lot of money then too, you know, so then we never had any trouble, and that was one way to keep our office open because we had a lot of advertising from--

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[END OF SIDE ONE]

PN: When Mussolini--

VM: Yeah, I sent it to San Francisco trying to combine with the *Il Corriere del Popolo*, but we couldn't make it go then. We tried to revive with Mancini's paper *Il Risveglio*, and we lasted about three, four months with our subscribers just thinking for the only thing they want the papers the way I used to print them. I just couldn't make it because gradually, you know, the people who could read Italian diminished, and I couldn't rely on too much in advertising because unless you have a circulation like I used to have at fifteen, twenty thousand copies.

PN: Wow!

VM: You couldn't make a goal so I decided--

PN: Do you remember, did you send many of your newspapers to Utah?

VM: Oh, wow. Helper, Utah; Provo, Utah.

PN: What about Salt Lake?

VM: Salt Lake, Utah

PN: What about Bingham?

VM: Bingham, Utah, oh, yes, quite a lot.

PN: Ogden?

VM: Ogden.

PN: Tooele?

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VM: All over. All over.

PN: Do you have the roles--do you have--?

VM: I have at least, well, all the towns in the United States I used to send the papers, and most of those are disappeared anyway, especially coal mines.

PN: Do you have the records for your newspaper that you used to keep?

VM: Yes.

PN: The subscription records and everything?

VM: Yes, beside the cities and towns and mining cable where we used to send we get--

PN: Are those here or do you have them, or did you send them to the college?

VM: No, no. I'm just trying to find out whether I sent them to the college with all the rest. I don't even remember all of that, but I will. Now, Fortunato Anselmo was a good friend of mine.

PN: Yeah, he was a good friend of mine. I talked with his wife and daughter this last year.

VM: Yeah, I know his wife and daughter. Used to be Pueblo boy. He used to work for Jachetta.

PN: Just for the record, of course, you know Fortunato Anselmo was the Italian vice-consul for about fifty years.

VM: Yeah, he was also criticized quite a lot by the

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Fascists during Mussolini time.

PN: Now he was anti-Fascist?

VM: Not necessarily.

PN: Now, see, that's why I say I've heard different.

VM: Now, with me nationally I took ---?---. There was nothing you could do different. You know, he wants to retain the consul, but then you take, now, Valentini, the one who wrote the book.

PNL Oh.

VM: He was Fascist.

PN: Zapito Valentini.

VM: Zapito Valentini, yeah. I was in correspondence with him even after he went back to Italy until he died. He used to write me.

PN? What did he do here in the west. Was he a notary public or what?

VM: No, together with Chilosapi the Italian consul they started a chicken ranch.

PN: Where at?

VM: Around Denver close to there.

PN: Around Denver?

VM: Yeah, and all the chickens died. ---?--- took a couple of years. He wasn't meant for that job. Then he taught at the University of Utah for six months or so.

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PN: I didn't know that.

VM: Oh, yes.

PN: Where did he teach?

VM: I don't know where he taught.

PN: Well, it's not in there. I read that.

VM: At the time that book that he was--

PN: Yeah, he wrote that in 1930 and that was published.

VM: He was very friendly with the Mormons.

PN: I noticed from his introduction he talks about them, you know, how nice the Mormons were and everything. A couple of questions I wanted to ask you about the socialists again in Italy. In your opinion how active was the Socialist Party in Southern Italy?

VM: Very active, very active, although they couldn't get far with the general public like they did with northern.

PN: Because one of the observations that people have made to me concerning the strikes in Utah, especially the 1903 strike, was the Northern Italians that were there had a better social base for unionization than did some of the Southern Italians.

VM: Well, because in the northern--

PN: Right. Do you agree with that observation you think so?

VM: Yeah. You take Rockville, Colorado where the coal

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miners were mostly from the north, they were all ready to go to strike any time, you know. We got most of the south, and we had to convince them because they come from place with a lot of industry, especially around the ---?--- even in Toscana.

PN: What were some of the main areas in Southern Italy of socialist concentration?

VM: Our province, my own?

PN: Because up in North--

VM: Because those farmers there were very organized under the General Confederation of Labor.

PN: The farmers were.

VM: The farmers that belong to the Fucino, the late Fucino which became big extension of the land and the Prince of Torlunia, he brought all the machinery way in 1900 that were not used in any other parts of Italy except a few parts north. I got a book showing that.

PN: See, in the north, I guess Reggio Emilia would probably be a key point.

VM: With--

[INTERRUPTION]

PN: Mr. Massari, we thank you very much.

VM: Your welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]