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A young  
Mother *in*  
Franco's prisons



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*Señora Pilar Fidalgo's Story*  
PRINTED IN ENGLAND.

A YOUNG MOTHER  
IN  
FRANCO'S PRISONS

SENORA PILAR FIDALGO'S STORY

**T**HE writer of this story is Señora Pilar Fidalgo Carasa, a governess. Fascists (*Falangistas*) arrested her in her house at Benavente on October 6th, 1936, and she was brought by Civil Guards to the headquarters of the Civil Government of Zamora, where her identity was established, and she was imprisoned. On entering the gaol she fainted; only eight days before she had been confined. She carried in her arms her newly-born infant—a little girl. Her only crime was that she was the wife of a Socialist, who was the friend and protector of Protestants, and whom the rebels had not been able to execute, nor even to arrest.

After seven months of imprisonment, Señora Pilar Fidalgo was exchanged, with all her family (her mother and her three children) against the family of Sr. Semprún of Valladolid. The exchange was not made without difficulty. Señora Fidalgo was kept in prison for more than a month after the arrival in the rebel zone of Sr. Semprún's family, which had always been treated with consideration by the loyalists.

The evidence of Señora Fidalgo is therefore direct, free and personal. At this moment she lives in France and is ready, should it be necessary, to confirm her statements and give further details. The facts that she reports happened in Zamora, in the very heart of Castile. The town of Zamora numbers only 18,000 inhabitants and, like all the province of which it is capital, has been since time immemorial a hotbed of reaction. Even after the establishment of the Republic in 1931, the "Rights" camouflaged under the name of "Agrarian Party," maintained all their old power. The partisans of the Popular Front, far less numerous than in other regions, had to struggle with Sr. Cid, who since the Lerroux-Gil Robles Government in 1934, had been Minister and lived as *cacique* or "political boss" of the Province.



The evening before the military revolt of July 1936, the recently promoted Civil Governor received in his office some provincial electors and municipal councillors, whom he calmly assured that nothing would happen. The Colonel of the regiment in garrison at Zamora, the Lieut. Colonel of the Civil Guard, and the officer commanding the Assault-Guards reaffirmed to him their fidelity to the Republic. When, at dawn, some men of Benavente came to warn him of the clearly established duplicity of the military, the Governor refused to arm the people, as they asked of him, giving as his reason that Sr. Cid himself—a few minutes before and in this very office—had condemned the rebellion and offered his services to the Government.

By noon the following day, Zamora was already in the power of the rebels, and the Governor was condemned to death with Sr. Moreno Jover, Deputy of the *Cortes*; Sr. Salvadores, a former Deputy; Sr. Pertejo Sesena, who had been provincial delegate since the election of the President of the Republic; Manuel Antón, Secretary of the Workers' Federation; and also some hundreds of republicans, who were murdered in cold blood throughout this furious persecution.

Of this persecution Señora Fidalgo tells in the pages which follow only what she herself has seen and what has been told her by eye-witnesses. Her account adds to what was already known of Franco's White Terror a new note of cruelty. It is the imprisonment and the martyrdom of mothers in the Spanish "Nationalist" zone. The story is told in her own words.

### *THE PUBLISHERS*



## I

### *Prison Régime*

On my arrival in prison I was compelled to climb a narrow, steep staircase to a cell where there were already locked up about 40 other prisoners, and I was left there in a half-fainting condition. Under pretext of interrogation, I was obliged to climb up and down this staircase several times a day, which, because of my recent confinement and my weak state, brought on a severe hæmorrhage. As I had not been allowed to bring any underwear for myself or my child, and there was neither mattress nor coverlet during the time of my imprisonment, I had to sleep on the cement floor—in midwinter also, when the climate of Zamora is one of the most rigorous in Spain. I endeavoured to wrap up my child so that she would not suffer too much. Her hands and face turned



blue with cold, because during these days the temperature in our cell fell four or five degrees below zero, and I had only a piece of blanket, which a companion had given me, to protect us from the bitter cold. At last I fell very ill, and risked asking the wardress (of whom I shall speak later) to call a doctor. Pedro Almendral was the name of the prison doctor. He came as a matter of form and, seeing my suffering, contented himself with saying that the best method to be cured was to die. He prescribed nothing—either for myself or my baby.

The wardress was called Teresa Alonso. Her daughter was Secretary to the Phalangist Party, and hence she had obtained the post of supervisor of the prisoners. She treated us with bestial brutality, overwhelmed us with the grossest insults and seized every opportunity of torturing us with refinements of cruelty.

The prison régime was barbarous. Two days after my arrival I could not give my baby the breast, for all these emotions had dried up my milk. I was given every afternoon only a little cup of goat's milk and water, which the child had to drink cold, for we were not allowed to make a fire. My daughter fell ill of dysentery and

bronchitis. My companions in tribulation called her "Miss Prison." (We were 40 prisoners in a cell built to accommodate one person.) There were two benches to sit on, and there was the floor to sleep on. For our private needs there were only three chambers, which had to be emptied into a rusty old cauldron, a receptacle which also had to serve for washing our clothes. We were forbidden to have food brought to us from outside; and we were given disgusting soup cooked with soda. We were all in a deplorable state. In order to dry our washing we were not allowed to go into the yard, and so we had to spread it on the cement floor of the cell. Then we all squeezed ourselves into a corner so as not to walk on it. We begged the wardress at least to permit us to spread out our babies' linen in the sun. She replied that we could dry it on ourselves: in fact, that is what we had to do, so that the infants should not suffer from the wet clothing.



## II

### *After five o'clock*

Anguish, indescribable anguish, arose within us when five o'clock came. Every day a new and frightful trial began with twilight. It was with horror we saw night fall; and we wished that the sun would never set. At eight or nine o'clock at night we all began saying good-bye to one another. Some tied up their bundle of personal belongings with the scraps of linen they possessed and used it for a pillow, as if they had tramped and rested for a last time on that final road which we foreshadowed. Some had already been parted from their jewels, ear-rings, wedding rings, religious medals and their little necklaces; they had given them to their relations through the bars of the interview cage, with messages for those soon to be orphans. One can guess with what

emotion these knick-knacks were received. Others who had not been visited gave up souvenirs of their domestic life—souvenirs of happy days—to those amongst us whom they thought would be the last to follow after them.

For those who had a baby with them—and there were many (women who had been confined as recently as I were numerous) the first sign that they were to be taken to the executioner was when their infant was taken from them. All knew what this meant : a mother who had her little one taken from her had only a few hours to live. There were heart-rending scenes. The condemned mothers covered their little ones with kisses, pressed them for the last time to their bosoms; and it was necessary to tear them away by brute force from their mothers. Then the tears ceased. The women fell into a state of semi-consciousness, of absolute fixity and of frightening dumbness, having lost all idea of their surroundings. It was in this state that the poor women were led to their death. It happened every night. I have no recollection whatever of our being spared these dramatic scenes. In the profound silence that we kept, we first heard steps on the staircase, then steps in the corridor; and then the door was

opened. Civil Guards and Phalangists appeared, who read out names very slowly—with a torturing slowness. With the reading of the first name, anguish and terror seized all of us. Those who had been named took their kitbag, gave it to us, and asked us to see that their people got it. Those who, once more, had not been named, uttered a sigh of relief at the thought that they had 24 more hours of assured life—a small concession that seemed to us a precious gift. In order to hear the list better, we held our breath and, so that our children should not cry, we gave them the breast. We who had to stay behind, fearing that the murderers would prolong their stay amongst us, begged the condemned ones not to delay their dressing. They knew, and we knew, that they were about to be killed and we were all in a hurry that the scene should come to an end; because if the victims claimed were slow in getting ready, the executioners hurled at us the grossest insults and threatened to take us all. The most tragic aspect of it was that the unfortunate ones who were going to die understood us very well and so went out quickly, some even without their shoes. However long, however full of change life may be, neither I nor any of the survivors shall ever forget those moments.



### III

#### *The two worst nights*

The two most sinister nights that I passed in prison were those of October 9th and of December 13th, 1936. I still have them, and shall always have before my eyes, the terrible nightmares of those two nights.

On October 9th the greatest number of my friends of Benavente were killed. There were, with many others whose names escape my memory for the moment, Epifanio Rodriguez Rubio, Felipe Martínez Abad, Ildefonso López, Enrique Villarino Santiago, Francisco Fernández, Luciano García Guerra, Marcelo Carbajo Lora. There was the son of a cobbler named Burgos who was only 19 years old, and Felix Vara, the painter Ibañez, Alejandrino Pérez, Teófilo Infestas, and Vicente or Venancio Alonso. The wife of the last-named,

María Garea, was imprisoned with us. They passed all the night of October 9th shut up in a hall of "Justice," which served both as a torture chamber and as a chapel for the condemned. It was also the place where we heard Mass. From our cell, grouped around the poor wife, we heard what was passing in that terrible waiting room when they came to find María Garea, who had to accompany her husband. This was one of the farewell scenes at which I was present. I shall never forget the moment of drama when this woman charged us (we who, perhaps, the next day would meet the same fate) not to abandon her children. The most tragic was to follow. We heard, when she had been conducted to the "chapel" where, with the other condemned, she found her husband, the moans of the two as they embraced, now meeting for the first time since their imprisonment. The first and the last time. The moment of meeting was also the moment of parting. At dawn their bodies, clasped to each other, were thrown into a common pit.\*

The recollection of December 13th is no less tragic. It was said one day that some prisoners had plotted to escape. Sixty were chosen from

among them, because the Governor, who had been asked what punishment should be applied, had answered, it appeared, that they could not execute less than 50 of them. On December 13th, the 60 prisoners were conducted to the famous hall of "Justice" near, as I have said, to our cell. Throughout a cold, clear night for five long hours we heard the grief-stricken cries of the martyred victims. We heard the lashings of thongs on flesh, and the wild insults of the executioners mixed with the shrieks of the unfortunates and the thud of bodies thrown on the ground and against walls. There were hoarse and harsh wailings, others rising sharply like the cries of children suffering from meningitis.

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\* With Vicente Alonso, husband of María Garea, were imprisoned among others Audelino González Vila, Victor Calvo, Domingo Pedroso and his two brothers, Felipe Martínez Abad and Epifanio Rodríguez Rubio, Municipal Councillors, Enrique Villarino Santiago, journalist, Francisco Fernandez, baker, and his companion José Muñiaga, who accompanied his wife Leonor Martínez Robles (who had been candidate for the *Cortes*), Modesto Rodríguez, employee in a pharmacy, Visitación de Castro, wife of another Municipal Councillor, Vitaliano Barroso del Olmo, manufacturer and local chairman of the Republican Left Party, Marcelo Carbajo Lora, journalist, Alejandrino Pérez, manufacturer, the painter Ibañez, Teófilo Infestas, a municipal workman, Ildefonso Lopez, manufacturer and journalist, Pablo Santos, Felix Vara, Luis Fores, Luciano Garica Guerra, manufacturer, Cesáreo Alonso and his sister, of whose tragic death we will speak of later. Later, a practising Catholic was also imprisoned, the Mayor of the town, Alfredo Rodríguez Enríquez, who was to be condemned to 30 years imprisonment, and who in April last was still in the prison of Zamora. Of all the above-mentioned, the lives of only Alfredo Rodríguez Enríquez, Leonor Martínez and Avelino González were spared.



#### IV

### *Masses and Sermons*

In the early morning Mass was said by the bishop himself. This took place only in exceptional cases. Ordinarily, it was the priest who confessed the condemned and accompanied them to the place of execution—not in the least as a devout duty but in a spirit of “collaboration.” Statements of detained prisoners took place later from depositions in the course of new proceedings, and were the occasion of fresh arrests and fresh executions. I recall in connection with this that a priest, to whom the wardress compelled them to go, took it upon himself to speak with the prisoners. By his insidious questions this cleric extracted names and facts which he conveyed to the Phalangists. He even employed this procedure with those who were soon to be shot and whose

fear and proximity to death and the mystery of the great beyond inevitably inclined towards religion. Another exemplary priest was the one who said Mass. All his sermons were inflamed harangues against the "Reds." He covered the republicans with insults and said to us that we were not imprisoned and to be killed because we were robbers, but because we were connected with men just as infamous. His imprecations were terrifying, and the most terrible curses came from his lips during the offertory. He refused absolution to one prisoner who was to be executed (Ámparo Barallón, of whom I will speak later) because she refused to declare that her husband was *canaille*. Such were the clergy who officiated at the last moments of the victims of the prætorian revolt. As I said, it was the bishop who came on December 13th to the prison to celebrate Mass for the 60 prisoners who were to die. They were suffering from a night of torture, broken in body, their poor clothes in rags, bleeding martyrs. . . . In such conditions and in the presence of their executioners they were confessed, and exhorted to "die bravely." It was in the same hall of "Justice" that the prisoners were led to hear Mass. Throughout the

ceremony we had to kneel without turning our heads towards the chapel where the men were. Behind us our gaolers kept guard over us. In this lugubrious spot, witness of so many martyrdoms and last sufferings, we often found small pieces of paper on which were written by feverish and trembling hands words of farewell, in which were summed up a last vow or a final request. On the floor and against those walls were big splashes of fresh blood—blood vomited under bestial blows, by those who, some moments later, had found, in death, forgetfulness and the end of torture. Sometimes, though not without incurring great risks, we could gather up these papers. We carefully preserved (as in the catacombs were conserved the relics of the Christians thrown to the wild beasts) the relics of our new martyrs.





V

*Young women murdered*

I remember numerous cases worthy of being reported. Among others is that of Herminia de San Lázaro, a young woman 25 years of age and of great beauty. She was married and was a prisoner until the month of October. They gave her liberty shortly afterwards, but she fell seriously ill, either because the sufferings she had endured had enfeebled her, or the emotions she had undergone had tortured her too much. They accused her of having thrown into the River Duero a statue of the Inquisitor Diego de Deza. For those who had established afresh the reign of the Holy Office that was a double crime. The clergy and the bigots of the province would not rest until Herminia was imprisoned. She was dragged from her sick bed, and again incarcerated. She entered

our cell at dusk and was for three hours a prey to intermittent attacks of epilepsy. That very night they took her to the cemetery and she was murdered. Her death was decreed to avenge an offence committed against a block of stone, the statue of one of the most notable among Spain's Inquisitors. I should add also, apropos of this statue, that for a long time persons considered to be of the Left were obliged to search in the river where it had been thrown at the time of the Left electoral victory. The searches were in vain, but many people were drowned.

The story of the Flechoso sisters is no less moving. They were brought in on a Sunday, the last Sunday of November, in the afternoon. One, Angelita, was aged 15 and the other 18. It tore one's heart to see those two young girls, then ignorant of the fate awaiting them. We did not think there would be any executions that day—generally they did not come on the Sunday to look for victims, and we wanted above all to persuade ourselves that no ill might befall the two children. We advised them to rest and to prepare for themselves on the floor a poor bed made with clothes and rags which we were able to lend them. They slept in each other's arms

and, for a while, we kept vigil over their innocent sleep. But towards nine o'clock the executioners came to look for them. One of the girls, very gentle in appearance, seemed on hearing the names to ask us what it signified and why they had been called. They dressed quickly, and the elder said to the younger, as she fondled her: "Take care, Angelita, if you do not feel well, lean on me." We were so upset that we could scarcely say good-bye. They went down the staircase and then perhaps realized what end awaited them, for we heard their cries. The following day we learned that they had been killed together, clinging to one another. A month later an order came to set them free.

I remember also some young girls of the Figuero de la Torre family. Serafina Figuero de la Torre, 15 years old, Aurelia Figuero de la Torre, 18 years old, and their mother, María de la Torre, are still in a dungeon as though they were dangerous criminals. The brother, a boy of 17 years, was killed, but the family does not know of his death.

All the members of the Flechas family of Zamora, both men and women, have been killed: a total of seven persons. A young man, Tránsito Alonso,



succeeded in escaping alone but, in his place they killed his fiancée and her mother Juana Ramos. They did the same with the family Carnero : the mother, the two daughters and the fiancé of one of them were all killed. A tailor named Silva, well-known in Zamora, was killed while his wife was in Toro. I could also cite innumerable families which were completely annihilated.



## VI

### *Sadism*

Julia Cifuentes, 25 years old, her mother Baldomera Velado and Matea Luna Larma, sister of a Provincial Deputy, were brought to our prison. They dragged Julia from her mother's arms to be killed. Her mother soon followed. Matea was killed at the same time as Julia. The three women, accompanied by some girls, had been brought by the Phalangists from Villalpando in a motor lorry. The prisoners had to suffer all sorts of outrages, and some Phalangists even wished to violate them, while others went away with their companions. Another prisoner called Irene d'Almeida de Sayago told me herself that she had been brought to the prison in a motor lorry by Phalangists who attempted to outrage her. These scenes were very frequent. The

prisoners were considered by those who conducted them as spoils of war, and excesses were as terrible as they were common. I should like to cite with regard to this the case of a certain woman Eugenia, arrested by a man whom everybody knew and considered until then as normal, a lawyer, representing the Conservative Party in Zamora, and named Segundo Vilorio y Gómez Vilaboa. This individual arrested Eugenia, as he did hundreds of women—it was his speciality—and beat the unfortunate with such violence that when she entered our cell her body was black and her underwear stuck to her wounds. After this exploit he violated her. But he didn't stop at that. When he was again on guard in the prison, he once more sought out his victim, repeated his terrible acts; and the martyr came back to her gaol. Some weeks passed. Then one night the monster came again to look for Eugenia, led her to the cemetery and there assassinated her.

Another case of sadism worth studying is that of an assassin named Mariscal. He went freely about Zamora and committed so many terrible crimes that even his accomplices were afraid. This Mariscal became one of the chief executioners, by right of a long succession of atrocities



committed without regard to age, sex or the condition of the victims. These two murderers would make a fit study for psychiatrists.

When we read the crimes of the monster of Düsseldorf with such indignation at the time, such disgust and shock, we were far from thinking that in our own country we should see even more terrible madmen emerge from among people whom we had considered normal. The fact is that there is no village, however tiny, in the rebel zone which has not its 10 or 12 criminals at least equal to the Düsseldorf monster; and many who surpass him in horror.

To be imprisoned is (according to the rebels) to lose all individuality. The most elementary human right is unknown and men are killed as easily as rabbits used to be—in fact more easily, because formerly to kill a rabbit a hunting permit was necessary, whilst to kill people now you have only to go into the street and fire on them as a sort of diversion. To stress which I shall recall that the first three women murdered in the prison of Zamora were Engracia del Rio, governess at Fermosella, Carmen N—, a young girl of 17, of great beauty, with lovely black hair, and María Salgado, of Zamora, widow and mother

of a small boy of seven years. These last two were led to the cemetery by a band of Phalangists who, once there, told them that they would allow them to run and that, if they succeeded in escaping, their lives would be spared. The two women were shocked but, at the same time, urged by the instinct of self-preservation, they ran madly from tomb to tomb, jumping over graves, hiding behind the crosses and the chapels. During this time the Phalangists, those "young men of good family," pursued and fired on them as though hunting. It was a night at the end of summer, and about eleven o'clock. Wounded, bleeding, victims of an incredible madness, the two women finally fell dead from the bullets of their hunters, the "*Señoritos*," \* who roared with laughter and went to recount their exploits at the casino and, on the following day, to take communion in the church of their parish, where a priest impatiently awaited them to congratulate them on the zeal they had shown in defence of "Holy Religion." The chauffeur of a doctor very well known in Zamora, Dacio Crespo Cerro, had succeeded in escaping to Portugal, but was arrested at Braganza by the Portuguese authorities, who delivered him

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\* *Señorito*—a "young man about town."

once again into the hands of the rebels. Before killing him they made him suffer the most terrible tortures. A woman prisoner was made to assist at one of those torturings, and she told me all about it. This woman was then feeding a child. The impression she experienced on seeing the unhappy chauffeur beaten by lashes, one ear torn off, his face all weals and cuts in many places, spouting blood from the nose, eyes, ears and mouth, was so strong that the baby she was feeding came out in septic abscesses all over its body. She begged that the baby might be looked after, but was refused. The poor woman was also killed; and the child taken to the hospital was no more than one great sore. I suppose it died there. In our cell a child died in our midst. It was there with its mother and grandmother—both prisoners. It had meningitis. It cried piercingly, and died without the doctor ever coming to see it, and without having received any attention. The mother and the grandmother, who had done their best for it, were killed together—the day after the death of the infant.



## VII

### *“Justice” in Franco’s Spain*

If this is what women endured, what shall I say about men? Every afternoon we saw in the yard the “Division” take place, which consisted in separating from the 1,000 odd prisoners a few dozen men destined to be delivered to their murderers the following night. Some had been condemned by those so-called “Councils of War,” utter caricatures of tribunals, whose decisions were based only on the evidence of parish priests and the Commander of the Civil Guards. Judgments were based on the offence of “military rebellion”! The rebels accused those who had not joined their movement of the crime of which they themselves were guilty.

Arbitrary tyranny and sadism showed themselves everywhere: the greater number of the victims of the division had not been tried. There was not even a pretence of considered judgment.

That, however, is without importance, for rebel justice does not stop at such details or lose itself in procedure. Those responsible for executions judge according to their pleasure, without any sort of control. How should it be otherwise? In this place there is no authority which is not criminal, partly because the right of authority is in proportion to the percentage of alleged delinquents, and partly because whoever does not kill would not know how to exercise the least authority over the murderers. The result of all this is that the "judged" prisoners are no better off than those who are not judged.

It makes no difference whether one is at home or in prison. Any Phalangist, if he so wishes, can enter any house, compel any person to leave, take him or her openly and murder without any questioning. If a relation or friend of the victims wished to protest, he knew only too well that he would suffer the same fate. Therefore, over each crime there was a vast and profound silence which nobody dared to break. The rights of the individual, the rights of humanity were ignored. Whoever entered the prison door knew that he would probably be murdered. Nor was he who stayed at home any more sure that he might not

be arrested during a family meal, or an hour after he had retired to bed.

Amparo Barallón, wife of the distinguished writer Ramón J. Sender, was murdered at dawn on October 12th, 1936. She had Andreita, her eight months old baby, with her. At six o'clock in the evening Justo, the administrator of the prison, entered her cell and dragged her child from her arms, saying, among other witticisms, that "the Reds had not the right to nourish their children." Amparo Barallón, powerless to defend her child, struggling, weeping, a prey to indescribable madness, shrieked and, then weeping, wrote a farewell letter to Sender, a letter which I kept for a long time, but had to destroy later because of the continual searches to which we were subject. I know that in this letter she delivered her children to his care and held responsible one of his relations named Sevilla for the situation in which she found herself. When she had written this letter Amparo fainted and when she came to herself she remained in a state of semi-consciousness, crying aloud for her little girl. At night, they dragged her from the prison and led her to the cemetery where she was murdered.\*

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\* Her two brothers had already been murdered.



Teresa Adam, another woman, met the same fate. She was married to a Madrid journalist named Ignacio Alvarado. Teresa gave me—and I have kept them—her wedding ring and some medals. She was a brave woman, very intelligent, well brought up and cultured; she was admirable in the face of death. I think that these examples suffice to establish in what form “Justice” is administered in the zone where Franco and his hired ruffians reign.

In regard to crimes, let us consider pillage and organized theft especially in the villages. In the quiet hamlets of the province of Zamora, veritable depredations by the Phalangists take place. The men go to the farms, pillage granaries, arrest inhabitants, take money, cattle, fowls, empty the cellars and leave the house perfectly bare. I remember in the first days of the “movement,” when I was still in my house at Benavente, I saw the sons of one of my neighbours (a doctor, Antonio Conde Hernández) young rogues of about 16 years old, with guns slung on their shoulders. With sleeves turned back like workmen, they, who had never worked, recounted as though they attached no importance to their words, and as though they were speaking of the most ordinary

occurrences in the world, the thefts which they had committed in the neighbouring villages, frightening by their childish bellicose attitude (which, as experience taught, was terribly tragic) forcing peaceful labourers to give up all that was imperiously demanded, and making the workers testify their enthusiasm for the "Cause and the Crusade." These good-for-nothings who made themselves hoarse with shouting, "*Spain, Imperial, One, Great,*" took back all sorts of victuals to their homes, where they shared them merrily—foodstuffs which were at once eaten at joyous feasts, shared by their relations, their oldest friends—those former proud defenders of "the sacred rights of property," those very same people who had designated as theft the Republic's plans for Agrarian Reform. The right of property had been abolished. Even the dead are not respected. Corpses are stripped meticulously of all that is of the least value. I can cite, having heard the account in the prison, the case of Sr. Zuloaga, a barrister and jurisconsult, eminent in León, who was murdered near that town and whose body was discovered absolutely naked. Sr. Zuloaga was a striking personality in local society; and kept himself apart from all political activity. He was actually of rather conservative tendencies.

They murdered in the province of Zamora about 6,000 persons; 600 of them were women. There is not a village, however small or isolated, which has not known Phalangist crimes. On the roads, in the meadows, in the fields, under the trees and in the thickets of the mountains, everywhere—for months and months—bodies appeared: some were left as they were murdered, others were disinterred by animals from graves hastily dug by the murderers. Towns and villages became places of silence; and suburbs places of mourning. Widows and orphans still alive and free have had to hide their grief for fear of being killed. They begged secretly, because anyone who helped the widow or orphans of a “Red” exposed him or herself to being shadowed.

Only the Social Assistance which has been organized is able to allay material suffering, but even then it is by imposing *moral* suffering: obliging orphans to sing the songs of the murderers of their father; to wear the uniform of those who have executed him; and to curse the dead and to blaspheme his memory.

At last here I am safe. I have been saved, a little by chance but mainly through the working of the laws of war which make hostages a rate of exchange.



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It is like a resurrection for me to find myself out of prison, free from all oppression and sure of never being replunged into barbarism. But I hold in my heart the sad images of those 200 interminable nights of nightmare. Nightmares that were *not* dreams—but undeniable reality. That reality was and remains, because, although once more I breathe as a free woman, in our cell pass to and fro some 40 women, endlessly suffering indescribable torture, while thousands of men are crammed in the halls, passages and court-yard, and await the fall of day to light them to the slaughter-house and the common grave into which their entangled bodies will be thrown.

In my liberty I am still one with them, as I was when I was in prison, and to this day I share their sufferings. What else can I do for them but denounce the cruelty of their executioners?

If the state of being human is made up of respect for right, of love for one's neighbour and of liberty, there are in the prisons of Franco thousands of beings whose sole hope is to be able one day to be called men again.

# THE WAR IN SPAIN

is an episode in European History which ranks in importance only after the Great War of 1914-1918. It affects directly or indirectly everybody in the democratic countries. Beginning as a conventional military revolt staged by reactionaries, it was used by the "totalitarian" states as an excuse for the invasion of the Peninsula. It had been prepared long beforehand—for Spain had been chosen by international Fascism as a testing-out ground for the barbarous methods of totalitarian warfare. The modern Vandals and Goths are decimating a people unequalled for their sense of human dignity, and reducing to ruins towns and cities unparalleled for their charm.

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