

2013/19

BATTIPAGLIA - 1969

Battipaglia, a town in the south of Italy, with forty-thousand inhabitants, abandoned to themselves. The few factories still standing, pack up and close. There is lack of work. The people are forced to emigrate. The people esaperated, strike. Against this their normal rights, the police force shoot, two young people are killed.

We have interviewed immediately after the dramatic events that took place in Battipaglia on the 8th. of April, the sister, the parents of the young worker, Carmine Citro, 17 years old, and workers, women and youths of the town.

15th. April, 1969,

Rome.

INTERVIEW BATTIPAGLIA

Why are the inhabitants of Battipaglia asking for work, and not for something else, because they cannot live. They have closed all the industries and the government is not taking any measures.

If the government will not take measures and open the industries and factories, we over here will never stop until it does so. What factories have been closed Madam ? They have closed Tanato, they have closed Ragasto, they have closed Baratta and they have closed all the factories, all the industries, and also the sugar-refinery. One cannot live here. The town of Battipaglia is tired of being joked around by everybody and also by the government.

I was working on my service, as a photographer I was between the policemen and the demonstrators, when I was assailed by about ten policemen who beat me up with cudgels and with kicks, then I was dragged on the ground, and bleeding, was carried into the small camion.

The special corp that came to Battipaglia were foreigners. The youths of Battipaglia withdrew peacefully into their houses, they took them and closed them up into a camion and held them there for the whole night, they took a bottle of petrol, my son was also there, and they told them that if it were not for me, they would have burned them alive, why, what have they done ?

They have only fought to get jobs and did not do anything extraordinary. The youths are tired in Battipaglia, they want to work and thats all. The policemen were shooting and throwing stones, they did not know what else to do. They were beating the crowd with cudgels, and sending the population who never rebelled to the hospital.

It is the police corp that came who rebelled. Here, the police must go



away, if not, this will never end.

What do you need in Battipaglia ? We need to work, something that satisfies our needs, it is useless for us to be always like this; the factories are always the same, and moreover, those in there, maltreat us, the salary becomes always lower, very soon, they will be using whips in there, they treat us like slaves here. It is impossible to live under these conditions. It is necessary that all will be changed from the beginning.

- Are the factories still occupied ?

- No! all have been evacuated because we were waiting for a reply from Rome. Now that the reply has come, and they have said that all is being adjusted, we are waiting for this other situation. If at this point nothing is done, we shall begin all over again.

- Do you think that this question will be resolved when the sugar-refinery will be re-opened ?

- No! it will not be resolved because we have only the sugar-refinery and the tobacco factory.

- Before, they were enough because we were 10.000 inhabitants, today, we have arrived at a media of 50.000 people. It is impossible that they will be enough.

- For us, it is needed a factory where one can work from January to December 12 or rather 13 months in the year, if not, the situation will never be resolved.

- Why, how do you work now ?

- Now it is only a seasonal work. That of 4 months.

- He who works for three months is a real king.

- There are those who work for 30 days in a year, 30 - 40 days. This is so because sometimes we have some factories for food conservation open, which remains so for 30 - 40 days, and then closes.

- As an interpreter of the sentiments of all the inhabitants of Battipaglia, I want to express the most vibrant protest for the way in which the daily papers of Naples, the " Roma " and the " Mattino " with their special envoys have given a version of the slanderous facts of Battipaglia and completely falsed everything. They went as far as putting the events one before the



other, they spoke about the shooting on the part of the policemen after the burning, when we all saw, myself and all the inhabitants, that at 5.35 pm, started the fire caused by those gentlemen of the police force, and at 5.10, or 5.15pm, we had the shooting, tear-shells, fire candles, and the merry-go-round. The news papers of Naples, the " Mattino " and the " Roma " : " The Mattino " a government paper , and protector of the police force, " The Roma " a paper of the right, have got their information, and so their special envoys from the public security, while it was the public security, the mobile, who as soon as they got down from the canions, rose up their cudgels. We all saw this.

- What is this ?

- Tear-shells and gun cartridges.

- And what is this ?

- This is the bullet of a mitre.

- Who was shooting this ? Where was it being shot ? Towards you, beside there ?

- Yes, it was being shot towards us.

- Have many people been wounded ?

- There are seven people wounded by bullets... plus two who are dead. Cidre died by a shot in the skull and the direction where Carmine Cidre died is still visible there, on the wall can be seen some very low holes. They did not shoot high. There you can see it. That is, from this height to this. Plus the other shots that stopped on the ground.

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- You are the sister ?

- Yes, I am the sister.

- Can you tell us how it happened ?

- If I know it, why not ? I don't know anything, I know only that they have killed him. They have shot him. They have carried him to the hospital but I don't know anything else.

- But were you not there ? Did you not see ?

- I did not see him. They did not really let me see him. I saw him alive at the station.

- When did you see him for the last time ?
- At the station. About 2 or 2.30pm, 3 o'clock, I don't know.
- And after that ?
- I did not see him anymore! I told him to come, to come home. He said no. I must stay, he said, because I must fight. I must strike. Ah! mamma, mamma, how unhappy is this story!
- And then you saw him again when he was dead ?
- No, I never saw him again.
- You did not see him again ?
- I saw him only when I went to ask for him from the doctors who were medicating him. I saw him covered with blood. The blood had flown from his head to his feet. This was only for a moment. Then we waited for the doctor, moment after moment, to ask him whether he was better.
- They sent me home, telling me to go and return the next morning, your brother will be better. They sent me home, and then papa came, he had come to take me. Liliana, he said, Carmine is dead!
- We were alone, myself and mamma. The doctor came out and said, there is no more hope.
- So he was dead immediately ?
- No, he was not dead, he lived for three or four hours.
- But when I arrived at the clinic, he was dead, because the parish priest went in. I asked: Father how is he ? Is he better, is there any hope ? But there was no more hope. There was nothing left.
- He said, pray to God, He is in the hands of God.
- How did you come to know about it ?
- Mamma had a presentiment, I saw my mother crying and telling me : Carmine is dead. I went down to the street under the rain to look for him, I went towards the clinic, they wanted to make me go home, but I went round the whole of Battipaglia, the town-hall was on fire and I thought my brother was among those flames, returning to the clinic, I learned that Carmine has been wounded and taken to the hospital. I asked how he was ? Is he serious ? Mamma was already at the clinic; and then we learned that he was serious, very serious.



- I saw him last in the clinic, he was covered with blood and was dying.
- He was a very good typographer, I invited him to go home when I saw him at the station, you are working, and you have a job, he replied, Lilitana, the others, haven't got jobs, I have got one, and I must fight for the others, we want liberty, we are young, we must fight, not knowing he was to find his death. He has fought for his companions.
- If you were a man, you could have been at my side to fight this war, after this meeting, I didn't see him anymore.
- He sustained that it was necessary to fight for the workers class, for all, and above all, for those who have not got jobs.
- The cry of the mother -
- They have found a job also for me. Everybody have a place to work. The factories have re-opened. Blood and deaths was the price for all this, and among them, Carmine.