

## MORTE SUL LAVORO

### "Death in the factory"

- Nerio Veratti of the joint Union Committee representing the Port of Genoa workers. Federico Pignatelli, president of the Taranto Industrialists' Association. Aldo Giunti, secretary of the CGIL. On the 5th of January of this year, Mrs. Gaetana Mele...Mrs. Gallone, to-day a widow. Please, sit down.

- ... Maria, said she, maybe your husband is in the hospital. She waited a while then she said: well, I go and see, maybe It is not like that, how could Lucia think that it was really him. We went to the firm where he used to work and they did not let us in. I said to them: If you do not let me in, I will show you. Damn it, if he is dead, you must say that he is at the hospital or something, he must be somewhere, right? Before I left my home, they went to my sister-in-law's and announced: he is dead. I did not know anything. It happened in the morning, at nine 'o clock, at nine-thirty. Then we had to wait till seven 'o clock in the evening in order to see him.

- "Death in the factory" is the title of this panel discussion presented by the CGIL, CISL, UIL Union organizations to the citizens of Italy from here, the city of Taranto.

- Aldo Giunti.

- One worker out of three in the course of one year is

going to be involved in an accident. Try and imagine if you can, there are 20-30 thousand workers in this city, line them up and count them: one, two, the third one out. Out of every three, one is eliminated. It is true, what we are talking about is numbers, dry figures, but behind them are human beings surrounded by their loved ones, parents, children, wife or husband, friends, involved with hopes, ambitions, disappointments. Nonetheless, nobody talks about this continuing man-slaughter because mentioning it means also saying and writing different things from <sup>what</sup> the bosses and their press are used to.

It would mean, for instance, not to mention that permanent threat to the peace in the factories which the workers' violence would certainly bring about. It would also mean above all that the violence which exists in the factories is not the violence of workers whose average salary in our country does not go beyond 130.000 lira a month; but that another kind of violence exists, real, brutal, a violence which can even kill and which manifests itself against the workers. It is in order to save a handful of thousand lira bills that the industrialists do not build the underbridges in the building yards or that they do not provide a proper support for a ditch even when the land is sliding, as it happened here, at the Italsider of Taranto. It is in order to save a fistful of money, to increase the productivity level that the time quotas are cut, the pace is intensified, the personnel is reduced and the required technical precautions are not taken.

- I thought I would participate in a panel discussion and

not in a show which has nothing to do with the panel itself.

- Which show are you referring to?

- I see that what is needed here is people with a certain sense of choreography who can begin...

- Listen, can I talk? can you let me talk?...I have shut up, please do the same. Imagine a factory like the Taranto steel mills, where 23.000 persons are taken to work every day, I mean executives, foremen, workers, who bring with them to the factory...

- Listen, let us call them just workers!

- What?

- Let us call them just workers!

- Workers, workers. We say so deeply distressed. Many of them are facing a job for the first time; imagine that some of them drag themselves to work although they might not be physically fit. If we analyze the causes of fatal accidents, we see that in order to solve the problem it is not sufficient to establish preventive regulations, nor is it ~~the~~ enough to say that the technical staff is not capable of meeting the requirements of the situation. It is necessary that we make the workers responsible again so that they understand that it is up to them to protect their own lives. As it now...

- My name is Caprino Giuseppe. Because I brought to the attention of my boss that the preventive regulations were not applied, I got laid off at once. And of this I say... I went to the control Board of the SIL of the Italsider, we made an inspection throughout

the factory and we found some high tension cables at the 380 in contact with metal tracks, some gas tanks lying around. We went to another yard: we found workers at an altitude of 15 meters from the ground without safety belts, because the firm did not provide them. Elsewhere we saw pieceworkers playing the flying angels without a protection net. After all the efforts we made, the Sil of Italsider would not even report it. So, what did they do? they saw I was getting really down to business; I went to my boss who showed me the bulletin where according to the article 41 I was going to be laid off. Why must it be so? Then it is not the workers who... but rather the bosses, as far as I am concerned... because we know the regulations... we do not want to die, we want to go back home to our children. We leave our homes in the morning to return at night so that we can earn an honest living. But they are behind us with their guns and hurry, hurry, hurry, one pushes the other and so you get the people killed.

- There is a law, the 482 of April 2nd 1968 which requires the firms to hire ~~the~~ invalids. The firms which ~~main~~ people are the ones that try to evade the law by asking the Minister of Labour for special dispensation. ICROT, a firm partially owned by the State, which operates in the fourth steel centre at Taranto would not hire invalids: I quote from a letter they wrote to the Minister of Labour: "We inform you that our jobs take place under very strenuous conditions due to dust and heat and are particularly heavy". COMET, a private enterprise belonging to the same centre claims in its turn: (I quote from the letter to the Minister of Labour) "that the workers are employed in emergency jobs taking place in dangerous areas ~~also~~ because of temporary bridges and of

the exceedingly high temperatures, because of the considerable height and gas leaks". Two workers, Angolano and Gallone, were killed by a gas leak on last January 5th. The bosses, whether they are private or State capitalists condemn themselves with their own words. A court suit has been filed against an unknown party.

- Workers and friends... When I say friends, I am not boasting since, being a lawyer, I have very often the opportunity of being on your side in the trials dealing with the "white deaths". I will stick to the cases of accident which can and should be faced and solved. It is obvious that safety belts and protective scaffoldings cost money and therefore the contractor is tempted not to spend it and rather risk human lives; nonetheless, I can assure you that the courts have never filed away such cases.

- Sir, can you tell me if any entrepreneur ever ended up in jail? That's all I want to know.

- I am coming to this. Look, if you really want me to speak up, I can come out really strong. Dirty deals, unforgivable negligence which is punishable according to the law...which is... I know you rebel... I accept and share your reactions. But, the workers must at all times remember and be aware that they are primarily responsible for the protection of their own lives. Listen. I cannot... I am involved in the Falivena case, I cannot here quote specific instances nor mention any names, because the trial is still going on. He is one of the last victims, a worker who was assigned a certain task four years ago: the pipe comes, he files away the metal chips at one end, then another pipe comes. He has been doing

the same thing for the last six years. Well, at a given moment... I beg you, don't get upset...we want to be able to co-operate and work toward a solution, so, let us be responsible.

I try to relate this with detachment, objectively, well do you know what happened? does any of you know it? maybe someone here works in the same mill which I am not allowed to mention; at a given moment, Taccone my friend, this worker forgets that a second pipe comes in immediately after the first one, he turns around and <sup>a</sup> pipe hits him in the back. Sure, it was a most unexplainable and macroscopic negligence on his part, you will excuse me, gentlemen, you see...

- Antonante... Antonante, excuse me...

- Sir, lawyer... excuse me...

- ...we are going to reply, be patient...

- Excuse me...

- ...For instance, in the department where I work, we have a ten seconds time quota for a certain movement. Every ten seconds a worker must lift a piece of metal which weighs between five and ten kilograms. Figure out what this means after eight hours: about eighteen thousand kilograms; add this up over a period of four, five, ten years, dear comrades, and you will see, as the lawyer said before, that it is not so much the negligence of the worker to cause the accident but rather the objective work conditions. Don't you think it is more fair to attribute that accident to the fact that this man after repeating the same operation, hundreds of times a day, for

several years, becomes dehumanized and starts working like a machine. Even machines break down...

- ...It is the system, the way the works are organized in our country which determine automatically the modes of production and the relationships in the factory. Therefore the problem we are faced with is of a political nature and as such we intend to tackle it and solve it. Comrades, the habit of assigning major shares of the production to contractors is a deliberate choice aiming at dividing the working class into two groups, the privileged and non privileged. It is a deliberate attempt to break the united front of workers by using a type of organization which escapes the initiatives and the rules of the Unions. The relationship between this type of contract and the accidents is beyond dispute. It is our intention to bring this scandal to the attention of Parliament so that this shame might one day disappear from our country and we would be able to resolve in modern terms the problem of the production of goods.

- Perhaps you forget, Sir, the case of that apprentice - I do not remember where he worked - who, while working on a crane mounted on a truck, dropped accidentally a heavy metal plate from a height of twenty-five meters and killed another worker. Well, what has been the verdict of the court? The apprentice has been accused of homicide. This is typical of what happens in Italian courts, this is the kind of barbaric system which they want to impose on us for the years to come.. Thank you. I have finished.

- There is no doubt that the responsibility for the prevention of accidents should be taken up by the very same people

who reap the benefits of the production and therefore should see to it that the environment is not spoiled, that the health of the workers is not jeopardized, that rivers and air are not polluted, that the cities are not unlivable environments because of the smog and the pace of life, that the workers do not risk their lives while producing at a machine-like rhythm. I think that this meeting has made one thing clear, the Unions are now under the obligation of bargaining not so much on the wages as on the actual working conditions. Health cannot be paid for by money, therefore higher wages should not be the compensation for dangerous work.

Our commitment will not be sufficient unless we are supported by the grass-root movements, by the factory councils, by the shop stewards, by all the workers. We commit ourselves to fighting so that the blood of Gallone Domenico has not been shed in vain, so that the blood and tears of all workers are not shed in vain, in order to eliminate blood shedding in the factories. Work should not be a war to be fought in the trenches, work should be the orderly activity of a country aiming at progress on behalf of all citizens. This is our commitment, our good-bye and our salute.

=== END ===



Final song

WHITE HOMICIDE

DOMENICO GALLONE, ANTONIO ANGOLANO

they were found right over there  
like two moles, with their heads upside down,  
killed by Carbon monoxide  
at the oven number three.

Flesh for sub-contractors sold at a low price  
to State industry coming into the South,  
poor rats victims of the efficiency game,  
of the maximum profits,  
of the maximum productivity.

They did not go on strikes, they did not carry posters  
which could upset the Authorities,  
but who lifted a finger for them when somebody  
sent them over there to die  
for a piece of bread?

They were found in the gutters,  
but they are one million dead and perhaps more,  
more than the dead in the whole war,  
in order to produce more profits  
more productivity.

DOMENICO GALLONE ANTONIO ANGOLANO

could have left,  
they were free to choose  
to die in the North  
in some camps full of hunger and of smog.

The law will take care of the corporal  
who supplied them.

Who knows how high will be his fine,  
an example will be set  
so that it won't happen again.

song continues:

Fifty workers out of every thousand, each year,  
die in the factory or in the building yard just like that;  
but who cares as long as this society  
is run by one law:  
more deliveries, more profits.