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19 July

Lucía Sánchez Saornil

Autumn 1938

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Retrieved on 11 June 2023 from
abcwithdannyandjim.substack.com.

Originally published in *Mujeres Libres* No. 13. Translation by
Danny Evans.

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An anniversary is always, whether we like it or not, a day of commemoration. We can publicise it or keep silent, make a note in the calendar or not, but our memory stands above and beyond what is convenient or desirable. It is faithful, without mystification, combining the objective representation of the facts with their intimate, subjective interpretation.

Since that glorious day in July a thousand circumstances contrary to our will have modified the course of events. Our civil war has been converted into a war of independence, our social war into a vulgar defensive war, our intentions have been twisted and our greatest acts of daring slammed against the closed circle of 1936-1938; but no one can say that our will has been broken.

19 July 1936! No other date is so full of meaning in the history of our people. And that meaning lives still, open to every possibility, capable of new birth.

Above the imposed silence, the many compromised actions and forced declarations, 19 July rises with expressive eloquence, unmistakable. And it is because of this, and only this, that the Spanish people are still standing.

Circumstances have trapped us in an iron circle. We have been forced into a retreat that we have accepted only because we know that 19 July continues to burn within us, shining in the darkness of our torture as the only hope.

We know that on this anniversary many balance-sheets will be drawn up in which false rhetorical resources will be drawn upon as if they were mathematical certainties; but 19 July continues to triumph as the only truth and the only way out.

For a long time, the whole political world has awaited our asphyxiation, and it is in vain; our faith will save us. Because the date can be erased from the almanacs, it can be buried under subtle pretexts, imagined conveniences, or sacred interests, but the memory of men remains awakened, and the memory of men strengthens their will, which no one can say has been broken.

Any attempt at a balance-sheet would be too painful; we renounce it deliberately. What remains true is that, with everything that has happened, we can still affirm our faith in 19 July.