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Lucía Sánchez Saornil
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March 1939

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The Unconquerable

Lucía Sánchez Saornil

March 1939

With a deep tearing inside we confront the loss of the Spanish war. Only those who have experienced day after day, hour after hour the building of that marvellous world born on 19 July understand all that has been lost with this defeat.

How many times have we believed that we were advancing slowly, that we were being held back by stubborn errors, that we were going backwards... And what a terrific push forwards we made in any case! It is true that there were mistakes and hesitations, it is true that the initial impulse was not consummated, but what a great door was opened out to the freedom of the world. And we can confirm this now, when we again breathe the toxic air of a capitalist state.

We created a new understanding of our rights that was in closer harmony with natural law. In the midst of war, hounded by numerically superior forces, amidst the inevitable disorientation caused by improvising our resistance from one day to the next, confronted by a ferocious and intelligent enemy aided by all weapons imaginable, changes and social experiments were taking shape that in the normal, peaceful, run of things would have required perhaps a hundred years of evolution. Witness the peasant collectives of Aragón

and Andalucía, some of the worker collectives in Cataluña, and the less well-known work of the peasants of Castilla la Nueva.

People with a PhD in self-importance have described our experiments as naïve and primitive baby steps. We don't want to deny the charge entirely because, in the last analysis, the Spanish movement, the whole Spanish war, was nothing but man – in the most precise sense of a conscious being – reacting against a legal administration that had converted social life into a series of mechanical movements, with no other object than to serve the interests of a privileged few. To overcome that system, we had to turn our eyes to the primitive roots of things. It was necessary to maintain an element of ingenuous faith as a counterweight to the old, false wisdom. Without it we would have risked merely changing the name of the system we despise.

Without this naïve faith, this innocent primitivism that the bourgeois economist nerds throw in our faces, we would not have carried out the magnificent experiments that the Spanish revolution achieved and which, though the war is lost, will remain, etched into the historical record for the benefit of those same economists.

But there are the other detractors of our movement: the 'humanitarians'. We have heard them say on many occasions that our experiments were too costly in blood and pain. They forget that humanity itself amounts to a series of experiments across the centuries, and if one were to think of the rivers of pain that each experiment has brought with it, then ours would seem relatively innocent. Experiments that have lasted centuries whose victims cannot be numbered; experiments that have condemned generation after generation to hunger and poverty; experiments that have dehumanised millions of people and which have not, by contrast, opened up any new path for humanity.

Once they criticised us because they envied our greatness, now they want to add insult to injury. But what they call 'crime' was the justice created by the long-term victims of legalised injustice. What

they call 'theft' was the attempt to bring some balance to society. What they call 'organised terror' was the defensive instinct of a people attacked with brutal ferocity.

Insult after insult is hurled, intended to bury us under a dung heap – an image that perfectly illustrates the moral quality of our detractors. We remain unfazed. For all our mistakes we are satisfied with what we achieved, and we will proclaim it to the four winds: to France and the whole world. We may be defeated but we are not vanquished; and despite our physical misery we can still look down on the moral misery of far-right swine that want to luxuriate in their own filth.

It is of no import. Spanish antifascism feels the dignity of its mission; it knows what it has achieved. It has written a page in history as an example to the world; a page whose deep and shining imprint will never be erased by the hateful bile of fascist scum.