

THE TRAGEDY OF SANTA ANNA

Beginning the morning of Aug. 27th only six days after the tragedy, I began to have little calm. I decided to start out and write a summary of the bloody tragedy of the civilians who were killed and burnt in the town so called Santa Anna.

This town was placed in a valley of almost 600 meters above sea level in the community of Stassano, Province of Isonzo. Situated in Mt. Lieto of Alpi Aquane, on the other side of Santa Anna is Mt. Pabbri in from this mountain can be seen the beautiful beach of Viarreggio.

The population of this town was 307, most of these people were miners, and the rest farmers, and wood choppers, of a very poor resources. They were hard workers and unpretending people, but they were pleased same as the other mountain-people. They had no ways of transportation, all the transportation they had was what they carried it on their shoulders.

For ten long years I was going to this town every Sunday and also between the week, bringing them the Sacred Mass, I could not live there because the town was very small and of the shortage of food. I lived at Culla, the Archbishop prayed me to look after this town. It took me two hours going and two hours coming back. I did not gain anything by going to Santa Anna, but I did this only to help out these people, like God wants us to do. All of these were very kindly, but were disappointed of not having a priest living in their town.

In this war some of the families had to leave this town because of shortage of food, but meantime the Anglo-American bombers begin to bomb. All the towns and cities so the civilians evacuated come to this town and occupied all empty houses, barns and all sort of huts. Who would believe that these refugees, met death, in such a lonely place like this.

We began to hear a few rifle from the Germans but few days later they were firing machine gun, every now and then the Germans and Partisan had a combat. During this time the civilians remained inside their homes.

On July 30th Sunday morning at the door of the church there was attached a notice (by Partisan) stating that all civilians were not to evacuate this small town, but on this dark day the Germans came together up all the partisan and all what they could find. Other German patrol was coming from Vadicastelle where they had mined the tunnel of a cave, and a large barn in which were the refugees staying.

I the (priest of Culla) was told by the civilians that the Germans had killed sick and old age people that could not evacuate, and that they were burning houses, barns and other storage places.

I was pleased to hear that all the families of Santa Anna had evacuated, but sometime German officer had told the civilians to return at their homes.

On Mt. Pabbri they started to gather all the man could be found.

On Aug. 12th we were back on the same tragedy, was just through with my sacred mass while we heard the firing of machine gun going off. Everyone was watching each other; the people all scared were believing that the Germans were still after more men. We climbed the mountain and we could see the small town of Santa Anna. We stayed all morning watching what was happening, firing and demolishing could be seen at noon inhabitants informed that at "Town called Culla" fighting and burning houses had started.

I told my family and other friends to get their food and clothing ready and leave, but as soon as we got out things outside we was blocked by a terrific firing

at the fountain just a few yards ahead of us. We heard terrible hollering. It was three boys coming in wounded. He started to run away, but we got five Germans of the S.S. troop. They had with them a horse. They stopped me and asked me "You Partisan?" "Partisan? No, no, we are not partisan", I answered. "We are res-  
tance."

They entered in the church gather a few men and left for Valdignastello.

In the afternoon there was poor news all around of us, many civilians were killed, many women were burnt inside their homes, in front of the church was seen a black smoke of the fire in which the bodies were burnt. While we were speaking we heard a woman crying. I ran to see what was her trouble. She asked me, Oh Father Guiseppi! Oh Father Guiseppi! "The Germans have killed everyone and now they are burning the bodies", she exclaimed with terror. "All you can see is the feet and legs", she said. I was terribly shocked by seeing the poor woman crying. I tried to ask her information, but I had not the strength to do it. I followed her to Culla. I finally came in to myself and asked her. Where is your sons and nephews? They are all killed, she replied with bitter tears. I encouraged the poor woman and left.

Seeing that it was impossible to do any thing for the civilians, I returned to my own home broken hearted.

The following morning the families of the victims begged me to bury the bodies. I asked the German commander if the bodies could be buried and permission was granted.

With a few men we left to find the bodies, closer and closer we were coming to the bodies. We could smell the stench of the burning bodies, we could not hardly breathe. We looked ahead of the church and we seen a spectacle scene in which made us shiver. Enormous pile of burning bodies. Only one single person was alive out of the whole town. He was covering the bodies with straw preventing the smell.

In this pile there was my best friend also (Priest) Father Don Lazzari, 33 years of age of the town called Parnocchia. Father Don Lazzari and all of his civilians had to evacuate the town and they came in my own town as refugees. He came to live with me for eight days, but finally decided to leave for Santa Anna where later he met his death.

I had with me a camera. I had to be careful in using it because the Germans were above us watching with field glasses. I seen coming toward me a German soldier. I just had time to hide my camera. He walked by us and did not say a word. On my way back all you could see bodies of human being and cattle, sheep, horses, pigs, and other putrefacted animals.

Arrived at home I told my brother to gather all the men he could find to bury the bodies. He found 39 men very small amount for all this work. The following morning I with the 39 men took off armed with shovels, picks and other equipment. On our way to Santa Anna the first scene I met were two sisters of the age of 20 years old. Their bodies laying beside the door of the mill and on the other side of the mill were lying the bodies of owner of the mill. Just a few yards away there was the body of a woman lying beside a creek. I blessed the bodies and went on. After a little walk I and my men began to smell the putrefaction of the human body, eight bodies were found scattered. One young man was gathering the bodies of his beloved wife and daughter. I helped the weeping young fellow gather the bodies, beside the wife and daughter, the Germans had killed his father, mother and two sister. He was left alone in this world. I blessed the bodies and encouraged the young fellow, and proceeded on my way. Could be seen all along the road dead animals.

More bodies were found in all position. Few person approached as we came closer to them, they were coming to bury the dead, crying and weeping. They were explaining to me how their folks had lost their lives. I also gave them words of courage, blessed the bodies and left.

SECRET

I with my 13 men arrived in front of the church. We found heroic persons that had started the work of burying. Instead of being equipped with gas mask, we took out handkerchiefs dipped them in alcohol and put it over our mouth as soon as it would disinfected the air, on account of the stench of the burning human bodies. I entered inside the church, on the end were the Sacred Water stands, benches, seats, chairs and other valuable things were burnt or destroyed. The organ and picture of Saints were used for a firing target. The Tabernacle and the Image of Santa Anna were still in good condition. It took the poor hard workers many years of charity to build this church, and the German destroyed in only few minutes.

I left the church with a great anguish, continued my voyage while the men were burying the dead, houses were burning. Further a way we met a pile of earth which made me think that their had been buried the bodies. I blessed them and left. On our way we could only smell the stench of burning bodies and animals. I crossed a few creeks and not a place were they had not suffered any damages. All the civilians had evacuated, going further a head we arrived at the house of Collo meeting few strangers telling me that little further their was 17 bodies buried by them. Some their homes were still burning.

I was getting closer to my own town. I stopped at a place called "Carras" and "Vinci" in which their were few bodies laying beside their homes. On one side stood a woman body standing beside the hills, further a head a party of bodies all coiled up in a pitiful pool of blood. The day was very hot and the stench was getting worse and worse. Many homes were burning. I was told that in one place 40 civilians were locked inside an burnt.

I do not believe that in the World History has been ever done before what the German have done in a short time.

Last trip to the cemetery, I blessed with Sacred water all the bodies that were buried. This is the end of my "Via Crucis". I was on my way to the church. The men were burying the dead. I tried to identify my friend, Father Don Lazzeri, but it was not possible. While I was observing, I seen Lieutenant Pucci coming toward me all displeased. I asked the Lieutenant Pucci what is wrong with you, he answers in low tone voice, Father I have lost my wife and 8 children among them one baby of few months. The hole was made and his family was to be buried. He shouted Father, Father, I'm going with my family an made attempt to jump in the hole. I held him by the jacket but I had no words to comfort the poor fellow. The men covered the bodies and he left verry discouraged, hollering I want to go with my beloved children. In the afternoon he came to see me and brought a few of his belonging, silver medal and others in remembrance to me "priest" and left.

Beside the church we counted 32 bodies of small babies and 24 women and the rest could not be counted because they had been burnt. 6 bodies of undressed woman were found back of the tower.

Among the bodies I and the rest of me gathered all the valuable things and brought them to my place to whom they will be delivered to their heir.

I was called that their was more bodies in one of the burnt houses. I looked around but it was impossible for me to find them. Going by the cemetery I seen the father of those two sisters of the mill making the hole. The mother and her sister gather the bodies in a sheet and with tears lowered the bodies in the hole. I waited that they cover them up, blessed them and left.

I was terribly tired and all upset. I walked a ways an remembered that I had left the most holy Tabernacle in the cemetery. I had to return and get it.

On my way back I met a wounded man with a doctor. I followed them. They were inquiring me, but I did not know where I was, being so tired I could not give them any answer.

The rustic crosses of the 400 assassinated case is more sorrowful than the millions that have lost their lives under bombardments, because a cannon or an airplane cannot be adjusted, but at Santa Anna, the old age, the sick and the children

SECRET

could not defend themselves, who assassinated knew what they were doing. The ACC  
processes are telling all the world of the Germans that they are more inferior  
than the barbaric race.

Whoever goes to Mt. Lucto and Mt. Pabberi never forget to look and pray for  
these bodies were the Germans have shown their ferocity.

Let us remember of the so called "Tragedy of Santa Anna" and write it out  
through out the world of the Barbaric Race of the Germans.

Translated by

Gino Tafanelli

U. S. CITIZEN

Residing Torre del Lago