


DEFIANCE+


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MICHELE ANGIOLILLO

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ANGIOLILLO DIED BRAVELY

Mail Advices Say He Was Collected and Spoke on the Scaffold at Vergara.

SPAIN SUPPRESSES THE NEWS

The Assassin Uttered Clearly the Word "Germinal" Before He Died, After Dressing Himself in the Black Gown and Cap.

LONDON, Aug. 21.—The Spanish Government has prohibited the publication in Spain or the telegraphing abroad of the details of the execution at Vergara yesterday of Michele Angiolillo, the Spanish Anarchist, who shot and killed Señor Canovas del Castillo, the Premier of Spain, on Sunday, Aug. 8. Letters, however, have been received here containing details of the execution. The writers say that the Anarchist slept but little during Thursday night, owing to his having partaken of coffee during the evening, which kept him awake. But his pulse was quiet and unaltered. The prisoner took a cup of coffee at 8 o'clock on Friday morning and drank a cup of bouillon at 10 o'clock.

At 10:53 A. M. Angiolillo firmly ascended the steps of the scaffold and donned the black gown and cape, placing the cross of the latter at the back of his head. He calmly regarded the spectators, asked to be allowed to speak, and uttered clearly the word "Germinal." (Germinal was the term given to the seventh month of the French Republican calendar, 1792-1806, which began March 21 and ended April 10.) The assassin then sat down on the bench of the garrote while the executioner adjusted the iron collar around his neck. As the executioner was about to cover the prisoner's face Angiolillo asked him to leave it uncovered. The screw of the garrote was then turned, the collar tightened, and Angiolillo was put to death. His corpse was exposed until 6 o'clock in the evening, when it was buried. All the spectators were greatly struck by the Anarchist's attitude.



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This pamphlet is a supplement to the book *Defiance: Anarchist Statements before Judge and Jury*.

Angiolillo refused the sacraments offered to him by the State priest, preferring to declare "*Germinal!*" as he was strangled by garrot.

This is why I am not an assassin, but someone who has carried out justice.

And now, that I have acquainted you, dear Sirs, with the motives which have impelled me, it remains for me to outline the probable likely consequences of my act from a social and general point of view, and from the point of view of Spain in particular...”



At this point, the Chairman, who had already tried in vain several times to stop Angiolillo’s haughty speech, formally commanded him to be silent, on the pretext that the declared remarks had nothing to do with the assassination attempt.

MICHELE ANGIOLILLO 1897

MICHELE ANGIOLILLO MADE THE DECISION TO ASSASSINATE the Prime Minister Spain after a meeting in London in which Spanish anarchists related their experiences of torture in the prison at Montjuïc. Of this meeting, Rudolf Rocker said: “That night when Gana showed us his crippled limbs, and the scars over his entire body left by the tortures, we understood that it is one thing to read about such matters, but quite another to hear about them from the very lips of the victims” ... “We all sat there as if turned to stone, and it was some minutes before we could utter a few words of indignation. Only Angiolillo said not a word. A little later, he suddenly rose to his feet, uttered a laconic goodbye, and abandoned the house” ... “This was the last time I saw him.”

On August 8, 1897, Angiolillo found the prime minister alone on the street, and shot him. When the prime minister’s wife ran up screaming, Angiolillo turned to her and said “Pardon, Madame. I respect you as a lady, but I regret that you were the wife of that man.”

Just as the thick walls of Montjuïc were not enough to drown out the cries of pain of the tortured, so all the measures taken by the Spanish government to surround with mystery the proceedings of the war council that sentenced

Angiolillo to be strangled, were not enough to conceal what took place before that cruel Tribunal.

Everywhere, even among those who wear the uniform of brewers, or jailers, or soldiers, or judges, there is someone, in whom the feeling of humanity is not entirely extinguished and who rebels against the horrors, to which he is forced to witness and participate from the position in which circumstances have placed him.

The Parisian Newspaper Le Liberaire was able to have, stenographed, the defense that Angiolillo delivered before his judges—and we are publishing it, as a (mind you, censors) judicial record.

— Errico Malatesta

Gentlemen, I first want to repeat here what I had occasion to say to the investigating magistrate who questioned me: I have no accomplices. You would look in vain for a fellow human being with whom I have shared my plot. I did not tell a soul about it. I conceived, prepared, executed the killing of Mr. Cánovas completely alone.

Gentlemen, you have before you not a murderer, but someone who has carried out justice.

For several years I have been closely following events in Europe. I have studied the situation in Spain and the various nations neighboring it—Portugal, France, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, England. My occupations and sympathies have brought me in constant contact with the hard-working and poor people of these countries. Everywhere I encountered the painful sight of misery. Everywhere I heard the same laments, saw the same tears flow, heard the same revolts stir, the same aspirations arise.

As well, in all these countries I noted among the rich and governments the same hardness of heart, the same disregard for human lives.

These widespread observations have led me to hate the inequities that weigh on, and are the foundation of, human societies.

Ardent, energetic men in love with justice have met with me on the path of revolt. These beings outraged by injustice and aspiring to a world of well-being and harmony are the anarchists. I sympathized with them and loved them as brothers.

And all at once I learned along with the horrified public that in this land of Spain, the historic land of the Inquisition, the race of torturers was not dead. I learned that of the hundreds of human beings, locked

in a now sadly famous fortress, they were suffering the worst tortures there. I learned that all the procedures of the executioners of the Middle Ages had been brought back into use, with that increase in refinement that scientific progress brings with it. I learned that five of these men had been murdered, that seventy others had been condemned to severe punishment, that those whose innocence had to be acknowledged, were subjected to banishment, and that all these beings were anarchists, or considered as such.

Then I said to myself, dear Sirs, that such atrocities should not go unpunished, and I looked for those responsible. Above the gendarmes acting as executioners, the officers acting as judges, and who all carried out orders, I saw the one who gave these orders.

I felt from the bottom of my heart an unconquerable hatred against this statesman who governed through terror and torture; against this minister who sent thousands of young soldiers to their deaths; against this criminal who reduced to misery, by crushing them under the burden of taxes, the population of Spain, which could be prosperous in this magnificent country so fertile and so rich; against this heir of the Caligulas and Neroes; this successor of Torquemada; this emulator of Stambuloff and Abdul Hamid; against this monster that I am proud and happy to have rid the world of—Cánovas del Castillo.

Is it an evil act to strike down the bloody tiger whose claws are rending human hearts, whose jaws are crushing human heads? Is it a crime to crush the reptile whose bite is lethal? For the carnage he committed my single victim was worse than a hundred tigers, worse than a thousand reptiles. He personified in their most hideous features, religious ferocity, military cruelty, the implacability of the magistracy, the tyranny of power, and the greed of the landowning class. I have eradicated him from Spain, Europe, and the entire world!

