

They Made Her A Frivola

A HOSTAGE IN THE SPANISH REVOLUTION

(Continued from page 13).

my film. She was an aristocrat and Spanish "aristos," no matter how poor, do not let their daughters become actresses. I turned to enter the Gualda door.

"No passa, Senor," said the "portero" firmly.

"Proque?" (why?) I said.

"Senor, no one alone—only two—always two or more Senor!" the portero replied, lisping his Spanish in the soft patois of the Andalusian.

"You see," he explained, "many suicides have jumped from the top—to a death, Senor, 300ft. below—on to the stones."

"Suppose two suicides go up there and jump together, what then?" I asked.

"Quien sabes, Senor?" And he dismissed the whole matter with one elegant shrug. I turned to go, it would have been pleasant to climb the Gualda, I thought, but if alone I could not go, then no matter. I stepped back into the light of the portero's door.

"Buenas noches, Senor," he said politely, as I started away.

"Senor, por favor," a girl's voice from the gloomy doorway to the Gualda called me.

"Yes?" I asked.

"You are the friend of Jacinto and Luis Castro?"

"Yes, I am. Why?"

"Senor, I wish to climb to the top of the tower, my aunt is too old. You, too, are alone. Then perhaps—"

"Yes, but surely!"

"Senor," she replied, stepping out into the light, "I am Pastora, the sister of Jacinto and you are Felipe. Often we have spoken."

I COULD not reply, so amazed was I. Pastora was the girl of the Cathedral. I had never seen her, but had spoken to her in Madrid when 'phoning for Jacinto; but one does not meet Spanish girls of the family, not matter how friendly one is with the brothers, unless one is a suitor approved by her relations.

I CLIMBED the tower accompanied by Pastora and there high above the city, we looked out over the land. Far to the south lay villages, their lights mingling with the stars, so that one could not see where the sky and earth met.

We talked. I asked Pastora to play in the film—would she like to—would Jacinto and her family allow it?

AFTER Easter was over we started work, Pastora was wonderful, and in spite of the threatening revolution we progressed rapidly. Too soon, however, the storm broke. Maria Victoria fled to North Africa. Jacinto took Pastora and her aunt to Madrid, then he came south and joined us in Franco's army. The war occupied my thoughts for a long time. But when I had to leave the army and was safely back again in England I thought of Pastora and wondered how she had fared in the troubles of Madrid.

Pastora—the sister of Jacinto, my soldier friend, my superior in

the army, my business associate in civil life, is dead. The horror of her death is less a horror than the life she led before she died. They made her a frivola—a naked dancer and singer of lewd songs.

The girl of 18, sheltered all her life until now, had to dance in what were once the finest restaurants and cabarets in Spain, naked before the soldiery of Government Spain. Dance or die—or worse. Her parents, her aunt, all of them were old.

Pastora was the hostage to prevent the old people supporting Franco. She was a film artist; all film artists, dancers and singers had to perform in the restaurants frequented by the soldiery who paid for their fun and drink in Government credit slips.

AFTER the abdication of the King from Spain in 1931, the Republic allowed vices, which had before then existed in back alleys in Barcelona, to spread and flourish openly in all the towns of the country. In mid-European cities nude women have always danced in cafes frequented by the underworld, but it was first in Barcelona that the "frivola," as she was called, was called on to dance in open cafes.

In a few months all the cities of Spain had their Qursaal or Featro Variedades in which the big percentage of artists were "frivolous." In 1936 every cafe, except a few isolated ones in Madrid itself, had its "frivolous." They had almost pushed from the theatre the "baile tipica" or national Spanish dancer.

MARIA VICTORIA'S brother was killed and Roberto and I were wounded in the same offensive. After leaving hospital I left Spain and returned to England. In London I went back to film production, but every spare moment I had I spent working for the general Relief Fund for Distressed Women and Children in Spain.

With Maria Victoria, who, with her mother, I had brought from Spanish Morocco, I played again on the stage the parts that she and I had made a success of in musical films in Spain and Paris. We collected all we could for the fund.

Incen Ena and the Infanta Beatriz saw us one night dancing a South American tango at a charity ball at Grosvenor House. Although both were in mourning, they were so grateful for our efforts that they determined to come incognito to see if our stage work was as good as the film work we had done together.

As a result of the visit from the Incen, I determined to find all the Spanish film artists I knew who could dance and sing. I produced a Spanish concert. We opened it at Portsmouth by Spanish Royal Command, and played to an overflowing house. From there the show was booked at a high salary for the Mayfair Hotel, where it ran for six months.

I was sent with Guillermo Ros by the relief fund to Barcelona to make a film of the work of the fund—a film showing the horror of war, the hospital in

Barcelona supported and run by the funds—the hungry children and women lined up for soup at the free kitchens.

One night late I was walking with Ros past the Cabaret Internacional. I stopped to listen to the music, faintly audible on the street. It was a song I had heard in South America, a Chilean song, "Una Clarella," "The Carnation," seldom would one hear it in Spain. The only girl that I had heard sing it had been Pastora.

We elbowed our way through the Catalanos who stood in a group by the inside door. The room was long and narrow, a balcony with boxes ran round the walls from the balcony under which we stood. The floor was filled with tables, and at them ruffians of every European nationality. The atmosphere was dense with smoke. At the far end, on a small black velvet-draped stage lit by two powerful spots, was the singer—a "frivola"—naked, but unbelievably and shockingly beautiful.

A red carnation was her only garment. Her smooth, beautiful body lit by "spots," she moved slowly up and down the stage, her head high, her eyes fixed on something high up at the back of the room. I was paralysed—numb—dazed by what I saw. It was Pastora—her face a beautiful, ghastly mask—her voice still the same husky, sweet voice that I always remembered. Leave it at that . . .

ALL my good-byes were over. Guillermo Ros and I were walking up and down the platform waiting for the train to take me to the boat at last.

"Adios nino y buena suerte," he said. "Good-bye and good luck." He handed me a letter as he embraced me in Spanish style. He, too, was leaving in a few days to go back to fight again. "Read the letter on the boat," he said. I pocketed it and forgot it.

A couple of weeks later I sat looking at the phosphorus turned up at the wake of the ship, in my pocket I felt an envelope. The letter was Ros's. I opened it, turning to read it in the light. I thought how bright the stars were and the moon rising, almost I could read by it. It was short. Pastora shot herself. Her father had been killed in Madrid. He no longer needed a hostage for his life; it had gone. Pastora, the frivola, the hostage, had gone too.

Pastora—flawless flower of old Spain, a thousand deaths she had died till the merciful bullet released her from her sorrow. A hostage of the revolution . . . So many of Spain's womanhood had given all they had, even themselves . . . In Spain men fought the revolution.

But, as it has been since wars began, women are the ones who suffer and lose everything.

THE calls of rare birds on Kent Island, near the Bay of Fundy, are picked up by a party from Bowdoin College. Because recording equipment could not be transported to the island, the calls were relayed by amateur radio to Grand Mana Island, where they were recorded on film by a group from Cornell University.

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