

15. Further Trials for Lucia

The apparition of July 13, 1917, was the central Fatima apparition. The first two apparitions led up to the third, and the remaining apparitions confirmed its heavenly origin.

On July 13 the beautiful Lady revealed to the children the Fatima Secret, which Lucia would later break down into three separate, but related 'parts.' The first part was the vision of hell. The second part of the Secret was the role of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in world affairs, particularly those of Russia — a word Lucia had never heard before.

After July 13, reports on Our Lady's visits to the Cova da Iria began appearing in the press. As is typical with 'new' apparitions, the Church press were reserved, even skeptical. Indeed, it would have been not only imprudent, but improper for the Catholic press to declare the validity of an apparition; that responsibility is reserved to Holy Church. The other publicity Fatima received was from the secular press which, particularly in Portugal, gleefully dismissed the apparitions as yet another hackneyed ploy by the Jesuits to make a profit off of superstitious peasants and unwary curiosity seekers.

Since most people in Aljustrel could not read, newspaper accounts made little difference to them. What was noticed, however, was the influx of foreigners coming to visit the seers: to question them, to offer them money in exchange for the Secret, to beg for favors, and so on. The peaceful hamlet was being turned on its ear, and very few enjoyed it.

Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta enjoyed the attention least of all, except for one visitor. Father Cruz, who had heard Lucia's first Confession and given her First Communion, came all the way from Lisbon when he heard about the apparitions. After questioning the children, he asked them to take him to the Cova.

"On the way," Lucia remembered, "we walked on either side of His Reverence, who was riding a donkey so small that

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his feet almost touched the ground. As we went along, he taught us a litany of ejaculations, two of which Jacinta made her own and never stopped repeating, ever afterwards: 'O my Jesus, I love You! Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation!'"¹ For his part, Father Cruz left Fatima convinced Our Lady was appearing to the three children, and he was a vocal supporter of Fatima and the children from then on.

Back at home, Maria Rosa's incredulity grew with each apparition. Observing visitors hanging on Lucia's every word, she told her daughter: "These poor people come here, taken in by your trickery, and I really don't know what I can do to undeceive them."²

She contented herself with redoubling her efforts to force Lucia to recant. She arranged another visit with Father Ferreira. "Once there," Lucia wrote, "I was to confess that I had lied, to ask his pardon, and to perform whatever penance His Reverence thought fit or desired to impose upon me. This time the attack was so strong that I did not know what to do." Father Ferreira did not know what to do either. After questioning Lucia again, "he dismissed us, shrugging his shoulders, as if to imply: 'I don't know what to make of this.'"³

The strife in Lucia's family over the apparitions took a financial turn. All the visitors to the Cova were destroying the crops the family depended on for food.

"We cultivated maize, greens, peas and other vegetables" at the Cova, Lucia recalled. "Now, ever since the people began to go there, we had been unable to cultivate anything at all. Everything was trampled on. As the majority came mounted, their animals ate up all they could find and wrecked the whole place.

"My mother bewailed her loss: 'You, now,' she said to me, 'when you want something to eat, go and ask the Lady for it!' My sisters chimed in with 'Yes, you can have what grows in the Cova da Iria!'

"These remarks cut me to the heart, so much so that I hardly dared to take a piece of bread to eat. To force me to tell the truth, as she said, my mother, more often than not beat me soundly with the broom handle or a stick from the woodpile near the fireplace.

"By a special grace from Our Lord, I never experienced

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the slightest thought or feeling of resentment regarding her manner of acting towards me. As the Angel had announced that God would send me sufferings, I always saw the hand of God in it all. The love, esteem, and respect which I owed her went on increasing, just as though I were the most dearly cherished. And now, I am more grateful to her for having treated me like this, than if she had continued to surround me with endearments and caresses."⁴

This admirably detached charity of Lucia's was tested when she was summoned to appear before the Administrator of Ourem, who wished to interrogate Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta about the apparitions.

The Administrator was Arturo de Oliveira Santos, nicknamed the Tinsmith because he had been a smithy by trade before he joined the Masonic Lodge in Leiria. This coincided with the Masonic overthrow of the royal Portuguese government in 1910. A young man in the right place at the right time, Arturo was appointed Administrator (a sort of grand mayor) over the district of Ourem, which included Fatima. Founder and president of the Ourem Masonic Lodge⁵, Arturo was called upon by his superiors to squelch the "superstitious nonsense" at the Cova.

His reputation as an ardent anti-clerical who frequently jailed priests on pretexts⁶ was well known in Aljustrel. Ti Marto refused to let Jacinta and Francisco go, and went in their place to have it out with the Administrator. Lucia's parents were less forthright. Antonio Santos said,

"My daughter is going. Let her answer for herself. As for me, I understand nothing of these things. If she's lying, it's a good thing that she should be punished for it."⁷

It was August 11, two days away from the next appearance by the beautiful Lady, when Antonio put Lucia on a donkey and they went, with Ti Marto, to Ourem. Although Lucia fell off the donkey three times, "what hurt me the most was the indifference shown me by my parents. This was all the more obvious, since I could see how affectionately my aunt and uncle treated their children. I remember thinking to myself as we went along:

'How different my parents are from my uncle and aunt. They risk themselves to defend their children, while my parents hand me over with the greatest

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indifference, and let them do what they like with me! But I must be patient,' I reminded myself in my inmost heart, 'since this means I have the happiness of suffering more for love of You, O my God, and for the conversion of sinners.' This reflection never failed to bring me consolation."⁸

Lucia was interrogated by Arturo Santos at length. "The Administrator was determined to force me to reveal the Secret and to promise him never again to return to the Cova da Iria," wrote Lucia. "To attain his end, he spared neither promises, nor even threats. Seeing that he was getting nowhere, he dismissed me, protesting, however, that he would achieve his end, even if this meant that he had to take my life."⁹

The long trip back to Fatima gave Lucia time to ponder the ways of adults. When she got back home she was given another lesson in cruelty. She found Francisco and Jacinta weeping uncontrollably at the well outside the dos Santos home. When they saw Lucia they stared as if she were a ghost. Lucia's sister had told the two that Lucia had been murdered in Ourem.¹⁰

Notes

1. First Memoir, p. 39.
2. Second Memoir, p. 71.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.
5. Walsh, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.
6. TWTA, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 216. The Tinsmith also forbade worship outside churches or after dark, forbade the ringing of church bells, and so on.
7. Second Memoir, p. 72. Lucia attributes this statement to both her parents, her meaning perhaps being that Antonio and Maria Rosa shared the same view. But it is obvious the statement was made by one person, and Walsh (p. 99) attributes it to Antonio.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 73. Ti Marto affirms this threat, stating that the Tinsmith told Lucia, "If you don't tell that Secret, it will cost you your life!" (Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 102.) Lucia makes no comment about her father and Ti Marto being questioned by the Administrator as to whether they believed the Blessed Virgin was appearing at Fatima. Ti Marto said he believed it was happening, Antonio said he believed it was "just women's talk." (De Marchi, *op. cit.*, p. 89.)
10. De Marchi, *op. cit.*, p. 89. Their anxiety for Lucia's welfare in Ourem evidently caused Francisco and Jacinta to forget that the Blessed Virgin had told them Lucia would outlive them both.