

THE BIG-HEARTED ONES

Her name was Asia but her nom de guerre was “The one with the big heart”. Her almond honey-coloured eyes, straight nose, full lips and the multi-coloured scarf she wore around her neck, made her one of the most beautiful women of the last few decades. However, she was not a famous Hollywood actress, although her resemblance was more than obvious, but a female soldier of the Women’s Battalion in Rapor, an area in northern Orion. A country where a war – as all of them bloody, ruthless and cruel – between different factions had been raging for years. In the image that made her popular, she was carrying a machine gun and lots of ammunition on her shoulder. She died on the Menuar front. She was married off at a very young age, but she was able to separate from an imposed husband thanks to new laws that were driven by the strong pressure of the female combatants on the more conservative religious groups.

Orion women over time have been killed, bought, sold and we are in the 21st century now. They have no opportunities and are living in inequality with men. It’s them who suffer the most inequality everywhere. Don’t ever forget that gender equality, respect for every ethnic group and religion and direct democracy are the fundamental hallmarks of our revolution –said Commander Yenuar at the funeral of “The one with the big heart”– Long live the Rapor revolution! Long live the liberation battalions!

- Long live the liberation battalions! – shouted in chorus the crowd attending the event.

Koxa was 18 years old, she had studied English before the war, she wanted to learn it well and then teach it to the children of the Rapor region. She lived in the capital. She had seen that in some families women were attached to the household chores for life and they weren’t even allowed to go outside. For her, that had a name: slavery.

The day the camp instructors arrived to pick up girls who wanted to join the militia, the families prepared a welcome meal.

- How long will they be with you? – the mothers asked.
- They will be in training for a month. Then, they will go to the front for two months.

Next, they’ll come home for a few days and go to the front again.

- She is the youngest of seven children. The three eldest have been in the war for a year already – says Koxa’s father. She wants to join the Women Battalion. The enemy army kills our sons, kidnaps and disgraces our daughters. Rape and beheadings are common scenes. We must fight to have a future. If she has weapons, she’ll be able to

defend herself. Before been captured, if she finds herself in such a situation – he said, looking at the ground-, she had better shoot herself so as to avoid the inhuman suffering that awaits her.

At dusk they entered the camp, the flag flying high at the top: a white triangle with a blue, four-pointed star and the letters WB in yellow. For two days, about a hundred girls came from different villages to train as soldiers. Most of them came from poor families. Some had interrupted their studies. Many of them had escaped from the traditional society that annulled them. They were there to fight for their land, but also for women's emancipation, one of the most important ideals of the revolution.

The emotional aspect was paramount in the training of the recruits. The stay in the camp included, as the first official acts, witnessing the swearing in of the new combatants and a visit to a nearby graveyard to honour the warriors of both genders who had recently fallen in battle. Tears and rage took possession of their faces, some of them hugging the graves. At the end of the ceremony, an emotional farewell song echoed loudly in the surrounding area. After the daily military training and firing practice, different songs of exaltation were sung at rest times. Collective games such as handball and basketball were enhanced.

Assemblies were very frequent and the girls listened to the lessons and speeches of the instructors, they asked questions and, if they wished, shared their opinions or aspects of their lives with the others.

- I am 20 years old. When I saw the fighters and went home, I didn't feel good. They were giving their all and I was doing nothing. One night I left home without my parents knowing and, together with other girls, we went to the camp. After some days here, I called them and let them know I was in the Battalion, not to worry. My mother cried a lot, but in the end she said she loved me, to take good care of me – Nora said.

- We want to create a new society. When a woman marries, she becomes her husband's property. Married women don't join because they can't, however, men do. Time ago, we couldn't even imagine men and women being friends and fighting together – said Rodien.

The training was over. The recruits were excited because, after a month of living together, they had to separate. They took the oath of allegiance with one hand on the flag and the other on their hearts: "For women's rights, full democracy, equality of peoples, social justice and the respect for nature I promise, I promise, I promise". Before leaving for

their destinations, all in a circle repeatedly chanted “Woman, life, freedom”, the maxim representing women from all the territories of Rapor.

The Democratic Forces of Orion, which included the Rapor forces, were advancing steadily. They took over different cities and in all of them they put their liberation postulates into action. Nowadays, the Rapor region has to face the incursions of the army of a neighbouring country, with a greater military potential and an almost feudal social regime. The men's and women's battalions are fighting fiercely together to repeal this aggression. The war is still going on and so is the revolution.

“Stories without Mufflers” (2006 -)