

Volume 5

Number 019

Guernica - I

Lead: It was not the first terror bombing in the twentieth century, nor the last, nor the worst, but that day in Guernica in 1937 remains a lasting symbol of brutality.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Civil wars are not very civil. Somehow the struggle of neighbor against neighbor, brother against sister, friend against friend, ratchets up the intensity of a conflict. The presence of common ancestry, religion, language, and ethnicity

aggravate the normal emotions present when people make war on one another.

In the 1930s Spain was far behind the rest of Europe in economic and social progress. At least partly as a result of this retarded development, the nation experienced a terrible civil war. In 1931 King Alfonso XIII abdicated his throne amidst widespread dissatisfaction. He was replaced by a left-of-center republican government which soon alienated those groups which had dominated Spanish life for generations. Attempts at separating church and state and giving women rights angered the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Elimination of the Supreme Military Council and a reduction in the size of

the officer corps infuriated the military establishment. Land reform programs and peasant strikes in the countryside sent waves of fear through the ranks of Spain's wealthiest landowners. To add to the chaos, many on the left who might have supported the government, frustrated at the slow pace of reform, advocated a socialist dictatorship.

In July 1936 a military rising led by General Francisco Franco Bahamonde attempted to overthrow the republican government. This inaugurated three years of bitter civil war. Participation by the forces of Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union added the element of ideology to the usual ingredients of civil conflict. They brought state-of-

the-art war matériel which made possible the destruction of Guernica. Next time: death in the afternoon.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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