

Volume 5

Number 020

Guernica - II

Lead: In April 1937 the town of Guernica in the Basque region of Spain was virtually leveled by German bombers in a brutal act of terror bombing.

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

Content: The Spanish Civil War pitted the Nationalist rebels under General Franco against the Republican Army, but it revealed many of the divisions in Spanish society. The fighting was brutal and atrocities were committed by both sides. Thousands died during the

three-year conflict and many more were executed in its aftermath. What made the war especially harsh was outside participation.

Most of the major powers of Europe agreed to a policy of nonintervention and then most proceeded to intervene. Britain and France officially stayed out but failed to enforce a ban on shipping arms. Italy sent troops and supplies as did eventually the Soviet Union. International brigades of leftists from Europe and America made their way to fight by the side of the Republicans, but it was Hitler's Germany that made the most destructive contribution. At its peak 5000 Germans formed the Condor Legion, bombing government

forces from the air with the latest equipment. The Civil War in Spain became something of a dress rehearsal for World War II.

At 4:30 on the afternoon of Market Day, April 26, 1937, Condor dive bombers dropped incendiary bombs on the quiet town of Guernica. There were no targets of military value there, the attack apparently was planned to inflict a maximum of civilian casualties, to teach the supporters of the government a lesson. Despite heated denials by the Nationalists, public outrage over the atrocities at Guernica was widespread. The town's tragedy became a symbol of new and harsher warfare in which innocent civilians would become fair game.

Research assistance for this series on Guernica was provided by David Arthur. At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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