

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 299

“The Spanish Civil War”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

“After the summer of 1937 those with eyes in their heads realized that the Government could not win the war unless there were some profound change in the international set-up, and in deciding to fight on Negrín and the others may have been partly influenced by the expectation that the world war which actually broke out in 1939 was coming in 1938.”

George Orwell, “Looking Back on the Spanish War.”

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 299. The Spanish Civil War.

The Spanish philosopher and essayist Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo is said to have quipped that in Spain, even the atheists are Catholic.

Spain is famous as a nation devoutly Catholic. One might even say zealously Catholic. It is the nation that gave the world the Spanish Inquisition. It may be true that no one expects the Spanish Inquisition, but everyone has heard of it. The fact that, in the early twentieth century, Spain was actually one of the *least* religious countries in Europe was less well known.

And that’s the reason why, in the early days after the failed military coup of July 1936, the news coming out of Spain was such a shock. In the regions of the country still under control of the Republican government, armed militias were killing people. Wealthy landowners and industrialists, shopkeepers, right-wing political figures, and most shocking, Catholic priests, members of religious orders, and devout laity.

These actions were controversial then and remain controversial in our time. To people on the political left, the Catholic Church had aligned itself with the rebel generals and was an instrument of oppression. It is argued that priests and lay people alike who were targeted were those known to have been hostile to or taken advantage of the poor, while priests and lay people

who had shown kindness to the poor were spared. To people on the political right, this was a radical Communist movement at war with religion in general and Catholicism in particular and *now* do you get why the generals revolted?

The numbers are controversial, too. The Nationalists say tens of thousands of priests and members of religious orders were killed during this period. Some call it the biggest persecution of the Catholic Church since the French Revolution. Others put the number lower, under ten thousand, and argue, as I said, that it was not their status as religious people but rather their reputations in their communities that provoked the violence.

But it's a lot of killing, no matter how you slice the numbers, and the world was shocked. The Spanish are killing Catholic priests? The *Spanish*?

It was especially shocking in countries where people were unfamiliar with the Catholic clergy's close affiliation with the ruling class in Spain. Countries like Britain and the United States. Whatever you think about the killings, there is no doubt they did tremendous damage to the image of the Spanish Republic abroad and dropped a huge propaganda windfall right into the generals' laps.

In the United States, Congress passed a joint resolution outlawing arms sales to either side of the conflict. Even so, US corporations like Texaco and General Motors sold fuel and vehicles to the generals on credit; these were *not* considered arms sales under the resolution.

In Britain, the Baldwin government responded by calling for an international agreement of non-intervention in the developing civil war in Spain and the creation of a Non-Intervention Committee to monitor and enforce the agreement. Apart from British horror at the news of the killings of priests, there were also fears that civil war in Spain might spark a general war in Europe. Once again, the lesson of 1914 was that even little squabbles between nations can blow up into a horrific war. No one wanted to go through that again, so isolating this conflict was essential to keeping the peace in Europe.

The opposition Labour Party was naturally sympathetic to the Madrid government, but the backbone of the Labour Party was British industrial workers, many of whom were Catholics from northern England who were repulsed by the stories coming out of Spain, making the question controversial even within the Party.

In Paris, the Blum government was also a Popular Front government and was therefore naturally sympathetic to the Spanish Republic, but it was also nervous. France had its own right wing, to which many military officers belonged; they were staunchly Catholic and leery of leftists. French support for the government in Madrid might trigger unrest at home, possibly even a military coup. Also, remember that Germany had just moved its troops into the Rhineland a few months ago. The French were keen on maintaining their alliances with Britain and Italy. The British

government was calling for non-intervention, and Italy was enthusiastically supporting the rebel generals.

Germany and Italy were among the countries that signed on to the British non-intervention agreement, but their participation was a farce. The German government helped the generals from the beginning, sending equipment and volunteers from the German Army and the Luftwaffe, who formed what became known as the Condor Legion. At its peak, Germany had some 10,000 military personnel in Spain, in combat and training the Nationalist army, and contributed some 600 planes and 200 tanks, although Hitler was pragmatic about German intervention in Spain. He did not see it in Germany's interest help the generals to a quick victory. He believed there was more value to Germany in continuing the war, dragging it out and keeping tensions heightened between the right and the left in Europe, and also in distracting international attention from what Germany was up to.

And Italy was all in for the Nationalist side. The Italian military had succeeded in its invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and was now cruising toward victory there. That war is, I think, better understood as one of the last colonial wars rather than as one of the first fascist wars, but success in Ethiopia encouraged Mussolini and his government to get ambitious in the Mediterranean basin. The Fascist Party dream was a restored Roman Empire, and a Fascist, or at least Fascist-friendly, Spain, closely aligned with Rome, would make a good start on that project.

No country was more heavily involved in the Spanish Civil War than was Italy. At its peak, Italy had 50,000 volunteers fighting in Spain and provided 660 planes and hundreds of artillery pieces and tankettes.

The German and Italian navies patrolled the coasts of Spain alongside the British and French navies, ostensibly as an arms blockade, but the Germans and Italians were pretty selective about who they blockaded. Germany's foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, quipped that the Non-Intervention Committee might better have been called the Intervention Committee, since its principal function was to conceal foreign intervention in Spain.

Why were the governments of Britain and France so willing to look the other way while Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were tilting the scales of the Spanish Civil War? If they thought it was in their own best interests to give the fascists a win in Spain, then they were being pretty short-sighted. Even Winston Churchill, who is famous for being clear-eyed about the threat posed by Nazi Germany supported the Non-Intervention Agreement. In 1943, George Orwell pondered this same question in the essay I quoted from at the top of the episode and concluded that the British ruling class must be either wicked or foolish.

And then there was the case of Portugal. We haven't talked much about Portugal since episode 128. In that episode, I told you about the overthrow of King Manoel II in 1910. Portugal became a parliamentary democratic republic and under that government joined the Allied side in the Great War.

History calls this the First Portuguese Republic, and it chugged along for 16 unstable years until it was overthrown in a military coup in 1926. The new government, conservative, autocratic, nationalist, and Catholic traditionalist, called itself the Ditatura Nacional, or “National Dictatorship” at first. In 1932, a civilian, the 43-year-old Antonio de Oliveira Salazar became the head of the government, and changed its name to the Estado Novo, or “New State.” Salazar and his government would rule Portugal until poor health forced him to step down in 1968.

The Estado Novo was a right-wing autocratic state. It wasn’t exactly what you would call fascist, though it was autocratic, traditionalist, colonialist, staunchly anti-socialist, and organized along corporatist lines, much like Fascist Italy. On the other hand, it lacked the racist and expansionist qualities of fascism; indeed, it suppressed the native Portuguese fascist political movements. Authoritarian anti-socialist Portugal was sympathetic to the rebel generals in Spain before and after the Civil War began in that country. Portugal provided diplomatic cover for the generals, by assuring Western democracies, especially its ally Britain, that though the Spanish Nationalists were being aided by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, they were not themselves a fascist movement, so don’t worry too much about that.

More significant was the Portuguese government’s willingness to look the other way as arms and supplies passed through Portugal on their way to aid the generals. This was made pretty easy by the fact that the lands on the Spanish side of the two countries’ long mutual border were controlled by the Nationalists from the early days of the conflict.

Against the substantial support the rebel generals were getting, the Republican government was isolated and alone. The government protested the international community’s non-intervention policy; by embargoing both sides of the conflict, it was implicitly equating the lawful, democratically elected government in Madrid with a bunch of mutinous soldiers who had taken up arms against their own civilian leaders. But this argument fell on deaf ears.

The Madrid government’s money was good. You’ll recall I already mentioned that neutral Spain did very well economically during the Great War, exporting to the Allies, in turn causing Spain’s gold reserves to grow. When the Civil War broke out in 1936, Spain had the fourth-largest gold reserve in the world, behind the United States, France, and Britain. And the Madrid government controlled it.

You’d expect that if a government had that much gold in the bank and was desperate to buy arms, the arms would come, because capitalism always finds a way. Well, arms did come, but arms shipments to the Republic were sporadic and haphazard. The Republican side was plagued with the problem of having the wrong bullets for its rifles, or the wrong artillery guns for its shells. Also, the Republic was forced to pay cash on the barrel for its weapons, while the generals got generous credit terms from their suppliers—buy now, pay after you win the war.

So who did support the Spanish Republic? Hardly anyone. Their most prominent supporter was Stalin’s Soviet Union. Like Germany and Italy, the USSR signed the Non-Intervention

Agreement, then went ahead and intervened anyway. There were never more than 500 Soviet military personnel in Spain, but the Soviets did supply hundreds of artillery guns, planes, and tanks, especially the Soviet BT-5 tank, which was one of the world's best at the time. Soviet planes, on the other hand, were no match for German aircraft, and many of the guns and small arms Stalin provided were obsolete. Stalin's government demanded payment in gold. In fact, most of the Spanish government's gold reserves were shipped to Russia in 1936, shortly after the outbreak of the war, for safekeeping, which caused economic problems at home. The Soviet NKVD, the interior ministry that led the secret police, sent agents to Spain who murdered anti-Communist figures in the Republic.

But Soviet support for the Republic was another propaganda gold mine for the generals, as it seemed to affirm everything they were saying about the Republic, and how its leaders were filthy Bolsheviks who wanted to destroy the Catholic Church and reduce Spain to a miserable hellhole, just as they had in Russia.

It's enough to make you wonder whether Soviet support was a net plus or minus for the Republic. On the other hand, the Communist International recruited Communists and other leftists from many countries to fight in Spain for the Republic. These volunteers formed what were called the International Brigades. More than 30,000 foreign volunteers joined these brigades, which were often given patriotic names connected to their country of origin. The largest numbers of volunteers came from France, then Germany's Thälmann Battalion and Italy's Garibaldi battalion. Some 3,000 volunteers were classified as Polish, most of whom were Jewish; the United States contributed about 2,500 to the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, and about two thousand Canadians signed up for the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, named for 19th-century reformers William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis-Joseph Papineau, referred to as the Mac-Paps for short.

Support for the Republican government became a favorite cause of the political left across the world. One of the most famous foreigners in Spain was English writer George Orwell, who fought for the Republican side, and afterward both wrote about his experiences in Spain and used them to inform his two most famous works, his 1945 novel *Animal Farm* and his 1948 novel *1984*. American writer Ernest Hemingway covered the war as a journalist; his experiences in Spain informed his 1940 novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

The biggest disappointment for the government in Madrid had to be the lack of support it got from Latin America, a region with close historical and cultural links to Spain. Brazil had seen a right-wing revolution and the establishment of an Estado Novo regime, similar to Portugal's. Argentina had a military leader who aligned closely with Britain, and Latin America generally was put off by the Republic's leftist slant. The one exception was Mexico, itself a revolutionary anti-clerical state that was one of the Madrid government's staunchest supporters, although Mexico could offer little tangible aid.

The domestic defenders of the Republic were Communist, socialist, and anarchist militias assembled by labor unions and leftist political organizations and armed with a mish-mash of weapons, whatever the government could get its hands on. These fighters were highly motivated, but indifferently armed and poorly trained. The fighters in the International Brigades were equally well motivated and perhaps had the edge in organization and discipline, though again, few of them were trained, experienced soldiers.

Most of the trained, experienced soldiers in Spain were fighting for the generals. And the best soldiers in the generals' army were the ones who had experience fighting in Morocco. The Nationalists also had better artillery and air support and usually the edge in tanks, though not always. Much of the landscape of Spain is coastal or river plains or the semi-arid plateau that makes up the middle of the country. This meant that when Nationalist and Republican units met in battle out in the fields, on flat terrain, the Republican militia fighters were no match for tanks and artillery and aircraft. Also, Republican militias organized by leftists and anarchists often rejected traditional ideas of a military chain of command, and elected officers or made decisions by taking a vote. Unsurprisingly, they seldom voted to go on the offensive, and this, too, hampered their military effectiveness.

Urban areas were a whole other story. There was plenty of cover here, and the militias fought bravely and fiercely. Often they were defending their own homes. So usually the Nationalists had their own way in the countryside, but found taking and holding cities to be a challenge. That's the war in a nutshell.

The best soldiers were, as I said, in the units that had been transported from Morocco. These were the career soldiers, the best of the Spanish Army, under the command of Francisco Franco. They also had a very harsh "us-versus-them" attitude toward civilians, which they learned in Morocco and brought home to Spain.

Some of the earliest Nationalist successes were won by these soldiers, who advanced east from Seville to take the cities of Córdoba and Granada. Perhaps more important was their campaign to the north in the early weeks of the war, parallel to the Portuguese border, allowing Franco to take control of the border region and link up with the rest of the rebel generals, who held positions across northern Spain.

A key battle in that campaign was at the city of Bajadoz, near the Portuguese border. The Republican force defending the city was larger, but the attackers better armed and trained. Hundreds of defenders were killed; after the Nationalists took the city, days of violence, rape and murder followed. Over a thousand civilian supporters of the Republic were rounded up and taken to the town bullring, where they were slaughtered by machine gun fire.

Spain produced a number of artists, musicians, and writers who had international reputations, people such as Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, and Manuel de Falla, whom we have already met. Then there was the 38-year-old poet and playwright Federico García Lorca, who lived and

worked in many countries, including the United States and Argentina, but was in the habit of spending his summers writing at his family's home in Granada. Alas for him, that's where he was when the Civil War began, and that's where he was when Franco's forces took the city. Garcia Lorca was not personally involved in Spanish politics, but that didn't necessarily matter when the Nationalists came. His brother-in-law happened to be mayor of Granada. He was shot. Garcia Lorca himself sought the help of an old friend, who was now a member of the Falange, the Spanish fascists who were supporting the generals. That did him no good. Nor did it help him that he was one of the most famous Spaniards internationally.

The precise details of what happened to him remain a mystery, but it is certain he was taken into custody and secretly killed by the Nationalists on August 19. The location of his remains is still unknown in our time. One Nationalist leader later justified the killing by declaring that Garcia Lorca "did more damage with his pen than others with their guns." A right-wing lawyer who was friends with Garcia Lorca's father later claimed responsibility himself for killing Garcia Lorca, who was gay, declaring, "I fired two bullets into his ass for being [gay.]" Only he didn't say "gay."

The death of Garcia Lorca inevitably attracted international attention, with the president of PEN, the international writer's association, H.G. Wells, publicly demanding information on the whereabouts or fate of Garcia Lorca. The Nationalists claimed not to know, and asking questions about exactly what happened to Garcia Lorca remained dangerous in Spain for the next forty years.

One of those rebel generals in the north that Franco was linking up with was Emilio Mola, who, as you know from our earlier episodes, was the former commander in Africa, transferred to a less important posting in Pamplona in northeastern Spain. From Pamplona, Mola sent troops north to the Basque town of Irún, on the French border. Irún was defended by leftist militias, Basque nationalists, and some French sympathizers who crossed the border. Again, the Nationalist attacking force was smaller, but it had tanks, artillery, German bombers, and rebel navy ships bombarding from the sea. After some two weeks of heavy fighting, Irún fell to the Nationalists.

This was a crucial victory. The northern coast of Spain remained loyal to the Republic. This was mostly because of the left-leaning mining and industrial workers of Asturias and the Basque nationalists of the Basque region farther east. Both groups supported the Republic and had much to fear if the military took control of the country. The fall of Irún isolated the north coast, both from France, where sympathetic leftists and Basques were aiding the Republicans, and from the rest of Republican-controlled Spain.

[music: Albéniz, *Suite española*]

One of the biggest challenges facing the rebel generals was they lacked a unifying ideology, which the Republican side had in spades. A military coup doesn't need a cause, but a civil war does. The Nationalist side was a coalition of different right-wing groups with different ideas. There were monarchists who wanted to see Alfonso XIII restored as King. There were Carlists who wanted a more autocratic monarchy with a King chosen from a different line of succession. Most of the rebel military officers supported a Spanish republic in principle; they just didn't want a leftist, democratic republic, but a rightist autocratic republic run by the military.

The one thing all the factions had in common was loyalty to the Catholic Church and a desire to restore the Church's political role as an ally of the wealthy and powerful. While the Vatican tried to maintain at least the appearance of neutrality in the conflict, the new Primate of Spain, Cardinal Isidro Gomá y Tomás, Archbishop of Toledo, was all in on the Nationalist cause. There were some Catholic priests who criticized the Nationalists at great personal risk, but most of the Church supported them. Priests in Nationalist-held country appreciated the sudden surge in attendance at Sunday Mass; this was because anyone who didn't go to Mass regularly was automatically suspected of leftist sympathies. Sales of crosses and rosaries and religious jewelry soared as people competed to see who could display their loyalty to the Church most ostentatiously.

Francisco Franco was in command of the best troops on the generals' side and that made him a front-runner for overall leader of the movement. The other generals made it official in September. Franco's solution to the movement's ideology shortage was shrewd: a sort of monarchy without a king. At a ceremony in August, Franco ordered the ritual lowering of the flag of the Republic and its replacement with the old red-and-gold monarchist flag, which he described as "our flag, the authentic one, one to which we have all sworn loyalty, and for which our forefathers died, a hundred times covered with glory."

The advantage to having a monarchy without a king was that it also made Franco a generalissimo without a king. The rank of generalissimo exists in the Romance languages. The term literally means the "highest of the generals" and describes a military commander who is subordinate to no one but the sovereign. So in Franco's case, that means no one, period.

Francisco was by no means the first military commander to bear that rank. Marshals Joffre and Foch both bore it in France during the Great War, and in China, Chiang Kai-shek holds a Chinese rank with a similar meaning; sometimes you hear him referred to as "Generalissimo Chiang," but forty years of continuous usage have caused the title to become closely associated in the English-speaking world with Francisco Franco in particular, and more generally with military dictators of Spanish-speaking countries.

Paradoxically, though the generals were leading a movement that claimed to be Catholic and patriotic, many of its front-line soldiers were Moroccan Muslims. The Nationalists were not ashamed of this; they boasted of it. In Seville, General Quiapo de Llano bragged on the local

radio station that he had promised the Moroccan soldiers the women of Madrid as their reward for taking the capital. There are accounts of Spanish leftist women being handed over to Moroccan soldiers to be gang raped; this led to Moroccan prisoners being singled out for especially brutal treatment when captured by the Republicans.

Recall that it was just 15 years earlier, during the Rif War, episode 253, that these same generals were declaring that war justified by the need for good Catholic Spaniards to civilize those savage heathens across the straits. The Republican side did its best to take advantage of this inconsistency for propaganda purposes, calling attention to how the self-proclaimed Catholic patriots were relying on Muslim foreigners to fight their battles for them. The Nationalists replied that their Muslim soldiers were as threatened by the atheism and Communism of the Republic as were good Catholics.

Once the northern Nationalist forces under General Mola were linked up with the southern forces under the command of Franco, the next logical move was an advance on Madrid, to take the capital and end the Republic once and for all. The Nationalist drive on Madrid was their major military effort from August through November of 1936. Whenever they met in battle, the Nationalists pushed forward, and the Republicans withdrew, and the outlook for Madrid was grim.

Four Nationalist columns were advancing on the city. The government of the Republic, anticipating the fall of Madrid, packed up and moved to Valencia, on the Mediterranean coast. General Mola confidently predicted he'd be drinking coffee at a sidewalk café in the city by Columbus Day, which is a holiday in Spain, too. Famously, the Nationalists also predicted that Madrid would fall not only because of the four columns advancing on the city, but also because of their "fifth column" of supporters already in the city. No one can document for certain who was the first to say this. Sometimes General Mola gets the credit, but the remark lived on far beyond the end of the Civil War. During the Second World War, concerns over a so-called "fifth column," that is to say, domestic traitors in a democratic country, weakening the nation from within in preparation for invasion from one of the Axis countries, would become a perennial fear. After the war, the fear was redirected toward suspected Communist fifth columnists in democratic nations, and you still hear the term used in our time, now often directed against immigrants.

Anyway, the advance on Madrid was interrupted at a crucial moment in September, when Franco ordered his soldiers to divert from Madrid to take the nearby city of Toledo. Now, Toledo was not an important objective militarily, but it had symbolic significance. Toledo had been the capital of Spain in ancient times, and its ancient role was reflected in the fact that it was and is still the seat of the Primate of Spain; that is, Toledo is to Spain what Canterbury is to England. Maybe this is the source of the expression, "Holy Toledo!"

At the beginning of the war, the military governor of Toledo, Colonel Jose Moscardó e Ituarte, holed up with his men and some of their families in the Alcázar of Toledo, a grand fortification that stood at the highest point in the city, along with a hundred or so hostages. The Republicans had been laying siege to the Alcázar ever since. Famously, the Republicans captured the Colonel's 24-year-old son Luís and telephoned him to demand his surrender or else Luís would be executed. Colonel Moscardo asked to speak with his son and instructed him, "Commend your soul to God and die like a patriot, shouting *Viva España*. The Alcázar does not surrender." Luís was killed.

But Franco diverted his troops, took the city, and broke the siege of the Alcázar at the end of September. By then the fortification was in ruins from Republican attacks, but Colonel Moscardo famously greeted the arriving Franco with the words, "I give [the Alcázar] to you destroyed, but with its honor preserved."

The city itself had little military significance, but its capture and the relief of the siege was a major propaganda boost to the Nationalist side, and the story of the death of young Luís became legend. The hundred hostages Moscardó had held in the Alcázar, and who were never seen again, less so.

Franco has been criticized for diverting his troops to Toledo because in fact Madrid did not fall. The Nationalist forces advanced on the city, but the Republican militias held firm, and they were relieved by the first few thousand fighters of the International Brigades and the timely arrival of aircraft and tanks from the Soviet Union. For the rest of the Civil War, Madrid will be "surrounded on three sides," as they say; it will be a dangerous place to be, or to get into and out of, and often short on food, but the city would hold out to the bitter end.

Madrid holding firm against the Nationalist advance will be the one major Republican victory of the Civil War. Perhaps Franco made a mistake in not focusing on the capital, although it is more likely Madrid would have held out anyway, and Franco's decision to score a propaganda victory in Toledo was the wiser choice.

In early 1937, the Nationalists gave up on trying to take Madrid and turned their attention to the Republican pocket in the north, along the coast, now isolated. For most of the year, the Nationalists ground down the Republican defenders, with help from Italian Army volunteers and Germany's Condor Legion. The best known—and most notorious—incident of that campaign was the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica by Nationalist, German, and Italian airplanes on April 26, 1937.

It was market day, and the town's native population was swollen by thousands of visitors from the surrounding countryside. Hundreds died in the attack, which horrified the world, especially since the attack seemed to have no military purpose. It was about terrorizing civilians, pure and simple. As we've discussed on the podcast, fear and horror at the thought of modern warplanes dropping bombs on civilians was much on the minds of people in Western countries in the

1930s. But this fear had been theoretical, until Guernica. Guernica proved the threat was real. The attack happened, civilians were killed, the morale of the defenders collapsed, and the Nationalists soon took the town.

The Nationalists denied the attack had even happened, claiming the Republicans had burned down the town as they withdrew, and also denied there had been more than a handful of civilian deaths. No one believed them. In the years that followed, hundreds more cities and towns in Europe and Asia would experience bombing raids, many of them larger communities that suffered far more deaths. Still, Guernica was the first, and Guernica retains a special place of horror in historical memory.

By October 1937, the Nationalists had completed their conquest of the Spanish north. Ten thousand Nationalist soldiers were killed in the campaign, against 33,000 Republican militia fighters. The victors showed little mercy to the 100,000 prisoners they took. Many officers and leaders were executed; most of the rest were forced to fight on the Nationalist side, or impressed into forced labor.

For the north was an important industrial region, home to a third of Spanish industry, two-thirds of Spanish coal production, and virtually all of Spanish iron and steel production. Much of this output was immediately handed over to the Germans, compensation for their assistance. By late 1937, the tide of the war had clearly turned, and now it favored Franco and his rebel generals.

And Franco's position as leader of the rebels was growing ever more secure. General Mola died in a plane crash in June 1937. His death left Franco as the most prominent leader remaining on the Nationalist side. In fact, the combination of General Sanjurjo's death in a plane crash at the beginning of the coup plus General Mola's death, also in a plane crash, less than a year later, has drawn speculation that these were not accidents, but were arranged by Franco to eliminate the two commanders who might challenge his leadership. This is only speculation; no one has come up with credible evidence, and the airplanes of the time were far less reliable than they are today, so bear that in mind.

By 1937, the stories were getting out about the reprisals the Nationalists took when they captured a town. Republican fighters were often imprisoned or killed, even in cases where the Nationalists had promised amnesty in exchange for their surrender. And not just militia fighters; civilians who worked for the Republic or supported it—even people known to have voted for the Popular Front in the 1936 election, were also killed. Members of the Spanish military who fought for the Republic were not granted the rights of prisoners of war; they were treated as mutineers and executed—by the actual mutineers.

By the end of 1937, all these reports of brutality and war crimes, plus the bombing of Guernica on top of that, did a lot to erase the bad impression left by the leftist attacks on the Church in 1936. International opinion began to turn against the Nationalists. But by the end of 1937, it was

too late to matter much. The Republic was in jeopardy, but what could its leaders do? Surrender was no option; you might as well die fighting as die unarmed in front of a firing squad.

So they did their best to delay the fall of the Republic. And, as George Orwell wrote, in the essay I quoted at the top of the episode, there was still the hope that if they held out long enough, the inevitable European war would erupt, the war between the fascists and the democrats, the war that the British were trying to prevent by containing the conflict to Spain. Once British policy failed and the war became a general one, then Britain and France would have no choice but to accept Republican Spain as an ally and take up its cause against the rebel generals.

Alas for the Republicans, their cause collapsed just a few months too early.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Peter and Andrew for their kind donations, and thank you to Jordon for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Peter and Andrew and Jordon help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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And I hope you'll join me next week, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we take our leave of Spain, for now, and turn our attention back to East Asia. The Japanese occupation of Manchuria only further radicalized the Japanese military and set the stage for all-out war between Japan and China. We'll take a look at The Imperial Way, next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. The year 1937 also saw another Paris Exposition. The theme was "Art and Technology in Modern Life." A number of nations built pavilions, including Canada, Norway, Finland, Italy, and Britain, but Germany and the Soviet Union went all out, on exhibitions meant to showcase the accomplishments of their respective societies. Soviet architect Boris Mihailovich Iofan designed the Soviet pavilion, which was capped with a huge statue of a worker man and a peasant woman, thrusting forward a hammer and sickle toward the German pavilion, which stood just across from it.

Not to be outdone, Albert Speer designed a taller pavilion for Germany, topped with a swastika emblem, upon which was perched an eagle, which glared down upon the Soviet couple.

The Spanish government built a pavilion at the exhibition as well, and used it to proclaim the values of the Republic and highlight the horrors of the Civil War. Spain's greatest artist—the world's greatest artist—Pablo Picasso, who was living in Paris, had received a commission to create a painting for the exhibition in January. He was sketching out the project when news of the Guernica bombing came in April; so he set aside his sketches and set to work instead on the painting that became the renowned *Guernica*.

After the exhibition was over, the painting was sent on a tour of Europe. After the Civil War ended, it was sent on an American tour to raise money for Spanish refugees. Afterward, the painting was kept at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, apart from the occasional tour. Pablo Picasso died in 1973, leaving a will that stipulated that *Guernica* be returned to Spain, but only after Spain became democratic once again. The painting was returned to Spain in 1981.

A tapestry copy of *Guernica* hangs outside the entrance to the Security Council chamber at the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York City.

[music: Closing Theme]