

# GUERNICA/GERNIKA



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The bombing of the Biscayan town of Gernika on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1937, located on the West of the Spanish Basque Country, is commonly regarded as the first case of murderous bombing of civilian populations, a practice of which the Second World War would shortly after, supposedly, provide even more cruel episodes, such as Dresden, Hiroshima or Nagasaki, to name only the most famous ones. As Miles has convincingly argued that those bombings are not what we have been told, I could not help looking into the official version of the first of all of them, Gernika (“Gernika” is Basque spelling, the one I am going to use in this paper. Otherwise, Gernika is often referred to as “Guernica”, which is Spanish spelling). Gernika has the peculiarity that, according to the official version, the painter Picasso was so distressed by the murderous brutality of the bombing that he painted a painting that has gone down in history as unique, as Gernika is the only bombed place that received such a high honor from such a famous artist as Picasso.

This is how Wikipedia introduces the story:

**On 26 April 1937, the Basque town of Guernica (*Gernika* in Basque) was aerially bombed during the Spanish Civil War. It was carried out at the behest of Francisco Franco's rebel Nationalist faction by its allies, the Nazi German Luftwaffe's Condor Legion and the Fascist Italian Aviazione Legionaria, under the code name Operation Rügen. The town was being used as a communications centre by Republican forces just behind the front line, and the raid was intended to destroy bridges and roads. The operation opened the way to Franco's capture of Bilbao and his victory in northern Spain.**

From a military standpoint, it makes sense to cut bridges and roads, that is, the communication lines of the enemy. Not so to machine gun in a sort of bloody orgy the civilian population and to bomb flat and set on fire their houses in the urban area of the town. This last action would not contribute anything to the campaign, the goal of which, according to Wikipedia, was not to destroy or burn towns, but to capture the industrial infrastructure of Bilbao as untouched as possible. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how it could help the blue army to murder the terrorized Catholic faithful of the town, seeing that one of the key reasons the blue rebellion

gained popular support was its *defense* of the Catholic Church against the continuous and violent attacks that it had suffered since the inauguration of the II Spanish Republic in April 1931.

For the sake of brevity, I am going to refer to the Republican/Popular Front/Frente Popular army as the red army, and to the National/Fascist/Francoist army as the blue army. The red army was the Spanish copy of the French Popular Front, and consisted of an alliance of anarchists, communists and socialist organizations. They were the real force of the “Republic”. The relations among those organizations were not very friendly; so much so, that in 1937, in Barcelona, in the middle of the Spanish Civil War, there was an open war between the anarchists and the communists, won by the communists, who took control of the city from the anarchists. Before that battle, Barcelona had been a sort of capital of anarchism in Spain. It is also useful to remember that, in October 1934, the organizations that less than two years later joined hands in the “Frente Popular” delivered a coup d’etat against the Republic because they deemed it “bourgeoise”. The coup failed, not without some violent fighting that, according to the official version, resulted in several deaths. However, the leaders of the coup against the Republic went scot-free.

Be that as it may, in February 1936, the same organizations that had tried a coup d’etat against the “bourgeois” Republic had become its main supporters. It seems that they had changed their minds in less than two years and come to the conclusion that the Republic, though bourgeois, was so to an acceptable degree.

It is to be borne in mind that, in the part of the Spanish Basque Country that supported the Republic, the majority of the red army consisted of militias of the PNV, the almighty party in the Spanish Basque Country at the time and today. One of the main selling points of the PNV is that it was a stalwart supporter of Catholicism. Or said it was. On that account, it is curious that part of the party decided to go to war *in alliance* with the enemies of the Catholic Church, an alliance that is still hotly debated among historians. Suffice it to note here that the PNV claimed to be Catholic to the bone but its militias fought together with the Communist militias. At that time, the Communist Party of Spain (PCE in Spanish: Partido Comunista de España) was as small party in the Basque country as well as in Spain. The PNV and the PCE militias fought together with the militias of other even smaller parties, all of them inimical towards the Catholic Church . . . except, of course, the PNV.

In military terms, it makes perfect sense for the blue army to shift the focus of its offensive from Madrid to someplace else in order to take Madrid indirectly, from an enemy weakened and deprived of supplies. The blue army had tried to take over Madrid three times in 1936 and 1937, but had failed time after time. Had it succeeded, there would have been no Spanish Civil War, but this was not the case. Therefore, the blue army had to think of some other way to get to Madrid. Either that or defeat was a sure outcome. The best place to take Madrid in 1937 in a roundabout way, so to speak, was to take control of the industrial infrastructure of the city of Bilbao (the main stronghold of the PNV, by the way), a city located in the North of Spain. Bilbao was at the time one of the most important industrial hubs of Spain, if not the most important one. It makes sense, therefore, that the commander in chief of the blue army, general Franco, the “generalísimo” or “general of generals” decided to shift the offensive operations of the blue army from Madrid to Bilbao. If the blue army succeeded in taking control of Bilbao and the areas that furnished it with raw materials and energy, it would inflict a deadly and decisive blow to the enemy.

However, that “operation Bilbao” had a serious problem, namely, that the red army was threatening the south flank of the blue army. It was therefore vital for the blue army to launch a fast campaign in the North and take control of the industrial infrastructure of Bilbao as fast as possible. This is why Franco and his generals decided to give up on Madrid (for the time being) and launch an offensive in the North with Bilbao as its main target. Madrid would fall once the enemy had run out of war supplies and had thus become unable to fight. As commander in chief of that campaign Franco appointed general Mola, an old comrade very well known to him because they had fought together in Spanish Africa many years. Whilst Mola launched the offensive in the North, Franco remained vigilant as commander in chief of the blue army. Indeed, the red army tried several times to attack the blue army from the south in order to divert its forces from the campaign for Bilbao. With this context in mind, let us return to Wikipedia’s story on the bombing of Gernika.

First of all, what struck my attention is the “photo” with which Wikipedia opens its story. Here it is:



Rather than a photo, that image looks more like a collage or paste-up, and Miles has confirmed that. The lights are not consistent and the ethereal white background is strange. It seems that the dark buildings (and the tree on the left, which seems to have survived the infernal fire) had been superimposed upon an image that God only knows if it is from Gernika or from someplace else. None of the distinctive features of Gernika can be seen in the photo. Perhaps I should hasten to add here that Gernika, though not a big town, is widely known in the Basque Country and in the whole of Spain because of its famous tree. I will explain this briefly below. At this moment, my point is: why Wikipedia opens its page on Gernika with such a collage? If they had any real

photos, why not open with one of them? That photo reminds me of the photos we got of Tombstone, of Dresden, and of course of Hiroshima. Also of the many fake photos from the Pacific Theater.

That's the only "photo" offered by Wikipedia EN. Wikipedia ES opens with the same "photo" as Wikipedia EN, but adds a second one, entitled "Aerial view of Gernika after the bombing". As far as I can see, it is not much better than the first. Here it is:



To me, it looks again as a collage. The mountains on the background seem to have been painted and sliding leftwards. Perhaps that image has been taken from another photo, on which a third one, perhaps retouched, of scorched buildings, has been pasted. Interestingly, and like in the previous photo, none of the characteristic features of Gernika can be recognized in the photo (provided that it is really a photo). It may be of any place. To sum up: Wikipedia does not offer any photo of "Gernika after the bombing", but collages. Why?

Let us return to the narrative of Wikipedia. One of the first discussions that one comes by in bombings is the discussion about the casualties, which I have to say, at least in this case, I deem as misdirection.

The number of victims is still disputed; the Basque government reported 1,654 people killed at the time, while local historians identified 126 victims<sup>[4]</sup> (later revised by the authors of the study to 153). A British source used by the [USAF Air War College](#) claims 400 civilians died. Soviet archives claim 800 deaths on 1 May 1937, but this number may not include victims who later died of their injuries in hospitals or whose bodies were discovered buried in the rubble.

The spread is too wide, from 126 to 1,600. This is a red flag. Gernika is still a milestone in the history of war and historians do not know how many people died in the alleged carnage?

Now back to that tree.

Guernica (Gernika in [Basque](#); officially Gernika-Lumo), in the Basque province of [Biscay](#), and 30 kilometres east of [Bilbao](#), has long been a centre of great significance to the [Basque people](#). Its [Gernikako Arbola](#) ("the



**tree of Gernika" in Basque) is an oak tree that symbolises traditional freedoms for the Biscayan people and, by extension, for the Basque people as a whole.**

Lumo or Luno was a much smaller town than Gernika, but located right beside it. After long years of quarrels between the two towns, they united into a single administrative entity which, not surprisingly, was named Gernika-Lumo, which is the name that it keeps to this day. As to the tree (an oak tree) and the freedoms of the Basque People, it is to be borne in mind that the tree of Gernika was the place where the chieftains of a part of what later became Biscay used to meet to settle accounts. There were two other meeting places in other feudal dominions that later on became Biscay, namely, Avellaneda and Abadiano, but Gernika was the most important of the three. Like in Gernika, the meetings in Avellaneda took place under a tree and, like in Gernika, a house was built to shelter the delegates when the weather was not friendly. The tree and the Meeting House of Avellaneda remain to this day.

The meeting of Gernika was a parliament in the sense that the delegates settled accounts by votes, but it was not a parliament in the sense that those delegates were not elected. There were not elections.

It is also to be borne in mind that not just anybody in that part of Biscay was allowed to attend the meetings of Gernika. One had to have a minimum amount of wealth to be admitted to the “club” -unlike in Avellaneda. It was the romantic nationalist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the one who made of the tree of Gernika a symbol of the freedoms of the Basque People. Avellaneda and Abadiano lost importance in time, in such a way that Gernika became the site of a sort of “parliament” of Biscay. The Basque freedoms mentioned by Wikipedia surely refer to the special laws given by the noblemen who ruled the different parts that later on Became Biscay. They are commonly referred to as “Fueros”. In 1451, after the formation of a unified Biscay, there was a single Fueros for Biscay. It basically consisted of tax exemptions.

In regards to the question as to whether the goal of operation Rügen was to humiliate the Basque people by destroying the symbols of the Fueros—a thesis that has been supported by some historians and politicians—suffice it to say that the bombing did not touch the area of the tree or of the small building that later on was built to house the meetings. In Spanish that building is called “Casa de Juntas”; perhaps a not too bad translation into English would be “Meeting House”. The fact that the area of the tree and the Meeting House did not suffer any damage despite the supposedly terrible bombing is significant in so far as that area is in the peak of a hill, and is, therefore, an easy target for bombing, a sort of “sitting duck”, as I think one would say in English. Reminds us of Lahaina, Maui, doesn't it, where the huge tree somehow survived the faked or controlled fires unscathed.

**Guernica was considered a key part of the Basques' national identity; it was long celebrated as "the home of Basque liberties".**

That is, for the wealthy nationalist leaders of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Guernica was also the location of the Spanish weapons manufacturer [Astra-Unceta y Cía](#), which had been a supplier of firearms to the Spanish military and police forces since 1912. At the time of the bombing, the population of Guernica was 7,000 people [PMO: 5,000 according to Wikipedia ES, but this does not matter much] and the battlefield was 30 kilometres away.

Here we are beginning to get something sensical. The front was about 30 km away from Gernika (and approaching Bilbao fast) in April 1937 because Mola's army had to take over Bilbao from the East as fast as possible.

Advances by [Nationalist](#) troops led by [Generalísimo Francisco Franco](#) [PMO: the supreme commander of the operation North was Mola, not Franco. Franco was taking care of the whole of the blue army; the forces assigned to operation North were led by Mola] had eaten into the territory controlled by the [Republican Government](#). The [Basque Government](#), an autonomous regional administrative body formed by [Basque nationalists](#), sought to defend [Biscay](#) and parts of [Gipuzkoa](#) with its own light [Basque Army](#).

Because the rest of the Spanish Basque Country supported the blue army from the very beginning. Indeed, Navarre was one of the main supporters of the blue army and one of the main suppliers of troops and money.

At the time of the raid, Guernica represented a focal strategic point for the Republican forces. It stood between the Nationalists and capture of [Bilbao](#). Bilbao was seen as key to bringing the war to a conclusion in the north of Spain. Guernica also was the path of retreat for the Republicans from the northeast of Biscay.

But orography makes it very difficult to attack Bilbao from Gernika. Indeed, the plan of the commander in chief of the blue army, general Mola, in agreement with Franco and his generals, was to march into Bilbao not from Gernika, but from another town called Durango, for there is a sort of natural corridor between the two places. Even nowadays, the highway from Bilbao to France goes through Durango, not through Gernika. The way from Gernika to Bilbao is full of up and downhills and forests, and this makes it impossible in practice to move an army through such a territory. Anyway, Gernika, being outside the way to Bilbao, was a good place to shelter troops and weaponry that later on would be employed in the defense of Bilbao. Perhaps the otherwise too sketchy map provided by Wikipedia EN of the campaign of the North may be of some help here:



As the reader can see, Gernika lies outside the way to Bilbao. Also to be noted is that the blue army could not stop in its main target, Bilbao, because most of the coal that fed the industry in Bilbao came from Avilés and Gijón. The blue army had to have under control the entire supply chain, from Gijón to Bilbao, which is why after taking over Bilbao they had to continue the march to the West.

Prior to the Condor Legion raid, the town had not been directly involved in the fighting, although Republican forces were in the area; 23 battalions of Basque army troops were at the front east of Guernica. The town also housed two Basque army battalions, although it had no static air defenses, and it was thought that no air cover could be expected due to recent losses of the Republican Air Force.

So, Gernika houses a sizable chunk of the red army but does not have any aerial defense. Odd. The red army knew all too well that Germany and Italy had sent planes to help the blue army, and made a lot of propaganda on this, presenting Franco as a sort of Spanish version of Mussolini or Hitler to argue that it was fighting Fascism. However, did the red army really expect to defeat the blue army without aerial support and housing its troops and weaponry in places with no air defenses?

Monday 26 April was market day; there were more than 10,000 people in the former Basque capital. Generally speaking, a market day would have attracted people from the surrounding areas to Guernica to conduct business. Market days consisted of local farmers bringing in their crops to sell to the village people. They would bring the crops of the week's labour to the main square, which is where the market was held. There is a historical debate over whether a market was being held that particular Monday as, prior to the bombing, the Basque government had ordered a general halt to markets to prevent congestion of roads, and restricted large meetings. It is accepted by most historians that Monday "...would have been a market day."

But it was not, because the authorities had suspended the market because the front was too close and approaching fast. The reader can find that bit of information in the Spanish version of Wikipedia and in many other places.

James Corum states that a prevalent view about the *Luftwaffe* and its *Blitzkrieg* operations was that it had a doctrine of **terror bombing**, in which civilians were deliberately targeted in order to break the will or aid the collapse of an enemy. After the bombing of Guernica in 1937, Wieluń and Warsaw in 1939, and Rotterdam in 1940, it was commonly assumed that terror bombing was a part of *Luftwaffe* doctrine. During the interwar period the *Luftwaffe* leadership officially rejected the concept of terror bombing, but continued to allow bombings which might result in heavy civilian casualties.

Thus, the *Luftwaffe* had a doctrine of terror bombing that it rejected itself. Either Corum or Wikipedia (or perhaps both) have to put some order in their minds.

The vital industries and transportation centres that would be targeted for shutdown were valid military targets. It could be claimed civilians were not to be targeted directly, but the breakdown of production would affect their morale and will to fight. German legal scholars of the 1930s carefully worked out guidelines for what type of bombing was permissible under international law. While direct attacks against civilians were ruled out as "terror bombing", the concept of attacking vital war industries-and probable heavy civilian casualties and breakdown of civilian morale-was ruled as acceptable.

In contradiction to what has just been said.

General Walther Wever compiled a doctrine known as *The Conduct of the Aerial War* in 1935. In this document, which the *Luftwaffe* adopted, the *Luftwaffe* rejected Giulio Douhet's theory of terror bombing. Terror bombing was deemed to be "counter-productive", increasing rather than destroying the enemy's will to resist. Such bombing campaigns were regarded as a diversion from the *Luftwaffe's* main operations, destruction of the enemy armed forces.

Again, Wikipedia has to put some order in its mind.

The Condor Legion was entirely under the command of the Nationalist forces [PMO: what follows is in contradiction with this statement]. The order to perform the raid was transmitted to the commanding officer of the Condor Legion, Oberstleutnant Wolfram von Richthofen, from the Spanish Nationalist Command.

But, again, as we are about to see, Wikipedia says the contrary.

While questions are often raised over the intent of the raid, the diaries of the planner and commander of the mission made public in the 1970s [PMO: it should be general Mola, who allegedly died in an airplane accident later on in 1937] indicate that an attack on Guernica represented part of a wider Nationalist advance in the area and was also designed to support Franco's forces already in place, a nationalist force of twenty five battalions.

Wikipedia just said that the intent of the raid was to cut the communication lines of the enemy. The ones who dispute this are the ones that support the view that the raid had no military goal and that its real goal was mass murder of civilians and destruction of the town.

According to the historian **Stanley Payne**:

“Guernica was selected as a target by Lieutenant Colonel Wolfram von Richthofen (younger cousin of the “Red Baron” of World War I), chief of staff of the Condor Legion for several reasons.”

Richthofen had no authority to select any target. He was a foreign guest under the authority of Mola, and he was not the commander either of the blue army or of the campaign. Germany was not at war in Spain. Let us follow the narrative of historian Stanley Payne:

[According to Richthofen, Gernika] housed several battalions of troops and three arms factories [PMO: therefore, not only Astra-Unceta, but two more, which go unnamed], lay near the front lines, and was connected by means of an adjacent **bridge to the road** flanking the main Basque [PMO: rather, PNV's and associates'] defensive position, along which the defenders might have to retreat. Richthofen's chief goal was to block a main junction near the front to stymie Basque troop movements and permit Mola to break through, encircling the forces farther north... Pinpoint bombing was impossible with the existing technology, and the only way to hit the targets was to carpet much of the area.”

So, as pinpointing was not possible for technical reasons, Richthofen, a foreigner who bypasses his superiors, including the supreme commander Mola, decides on his own to launch a massive raid of random destruction, “carpeting” the area of the bridge and the road which would damage everything, target or no target. With a bit of luck, as the planes were operating in the dark of dust and rubble, the bombs would destroy the bridge and the roads. But where were the German Stukas, precision bombers? Richthofen would have been court-martialed and summarily dismissed to Berlin by the command of the blue army. Had he been a Spanish officer, I guess that he would have ended up in front of the firing squad. Had Mola deemed it fit to bomb the roads and bridges of Gernika or of Durango or of any other enclave, he would have instructed the aiding German and Italian air forces to do so, though I do not think that he would have approved the clumsy way that Wikipedia attributes to Richthofen.

Richthofen, understanding the strategic importance of the town in the advance on Bilbao [PMO: Mola was a general with ample experience, and understood a thing or two about military operations. Let me repeat again that he was the commander in chief] and restricting Republican retreat, ordered an attack against the roads and bridge in the Renteria suburb. [PMO: As noted, he had no authority to do any such thing]. **Destruction of the bridge was considered the primary objective** [PMO: by “carpet bombing” Where were the famous Stukas of the Luftwaffe?] since the raid was to operate in conjunction with Nationalist troop movements against Republicans around Marquina [PMO: the Nationalist troops had to be very careful, because Richthofen was “carpeting” the places where they were moving without a warning to Mola or any of his superiors. They could be bombed anytime by their own allies]. Secondary objectives were restriction of Republican traffic/equipment movements and the prevention of bridge repair via the creation of rubble around the bridge.

Understandable if those were the orders of Mola, but there is no record of that.

The Condor Legion persuaded Franco to send troops to go north and to be led by General Emilio Mola.

After the three consecutive failures to take Madrid in 1936 and 1937, the blue army high command, led by Franco and made up by him and his generals, decided to give up on Madrid, go



sideways and attack the industrial North of Spain in order to impair the capabilities of the enemy and, of course, to use that infrastructure to his own benefit. Madrid remained of course the primary target of the campaign. If it is true that Franco was the real supreme commander of the blue army (something that is debatable), he was the one who drafted the plan with his generals. They appointed general Mola as commander in chief of that operation. The general of the generals (the generalísimo) was Franco, and the Condor Legion was supplementary aid courtesy of the Luftwaffe, just like the Italian squadron. Neither Franco nor his generals needed any persuasion of the Condor Legion. They were the ones who made the decisions and conducted the war.

**On 31 March 1937, Mola attacked the province of Biscay, which included the bombing of Durango by the Condor Legion.**

And, as Wikipedia itself acknowledges, by the Italian Air Force. Oddly enough, Richthofen is mentioned many times, but we are not even given the name of the Italian commander, who should have been be on the same standing as Richthofen. At this point, it is very instructive to have a look at the Wikipedia page about the bombing of Durango on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1937, where we read:

**Durango, a town of 10,000 inhabitants, was a road and railway junction between Bilbao and the front. By bombing the road and infrastructure in the town, the Republican forces would be prevented from sending reinforcements from Bilbao. It would also ensure that the Basque and Republican troops couldn't retreat in an orderly fashion in order to fight another day. Despite the importance of Durango as a transportation junction, the town had no air defences, and there were only a few Republican fighter planes to be found in the Basque region.**

Again, like in Gernika, we have a big concentration point of terrestrial forces without any air defenses. It seems that the “Republicans” want to lose the war. Indeed, I think that there is something to this hypothesis, but this is not the place to deal with it. The point now is that the red army knew all too well that the blue army had German and Italian planes at its disposal. By the way, where were the planes of the red army? Was the red army fighting a decisive campaign with no air forces knowing that the enemy had the aid of two foreign squadrons of modern aircraft? Did not it cross their minds that the blue army could attack them from the air? What kind of officers were commanding the red army?

**On 31 March, German and Italian transport planes modified to carry bombs (German Ju 52 and Italian Savoia-Marchetti SM.81) from the Condor Legion and the *Aviazione Legionaria* bombed the town in relays. Two churches were bombed during the celebration of mass, killing 14 nuns and the officiated priest. Furthermore, Heinkel He 51 fighters strafed fleeing civilians [PMO: that is, Catholics who were attending Mass and were running away in terror]. Altogether, around 250 civilians (Thomas: 248; Beevor: 250 and Preston: 258) died in the attack.**

Killing Catholics, and, most of all, burning ecclesiastical patrimony of great historical and artistic value is something that the Frente Popular had done since 1931, which is why one of the main reasons why the blue rebellion had a wide support among the Spanish people was its defense of the Catholic Church against the repeated violent attacks of the “Republicans”. In view of that, what sense does it make for the blues to show up at Mass time, bomb the churches and chase and machine gun the Catholic faithful who fled the crumbling churches in panic?

Republicans put up a tough fight against the German troops but eventually were forced back [PMO: There were no German troops, only planes. The troops, red and blue, were all Spanish]. Many refugees fled to Guernica for safety, about a thousand people turned to Guernica. On 25 April, Mola sent a warning to Franco saying that he was planning a heavy strike against Guernica.

To which Franco should have assented, as they had to prevent enemy reinforcements and take Bilbao fast. The wording of Wikipedia suggests that Mola was planning indiscriminate mass murder and did not care much about bridges, communication lines or enemy forces. Was then the “heavy strike against Guernica” that Mola was planning a mass murder of civilians and indiscriminate destruction of the town? What good would it be? Or was it rather to destroy the barracks and weaponry of the red army that had taken shelter in Gernika? Or the communication lines of the enemy? Remember that colonel Richthofen, seemingly savvier than general Mola in regards to military operations, had realized the vital importance of cutting the communication lines of the enemy to reach the key target, Bilbao. Was really Mola so inept that he had failed to note that? Or are we being told a made-up story?

After Nationalist forces led by General Emilio Mola's forces took the town three days later, the Nationalist side claimed that no effort to establish an accurate number had been made by the opposite side. The Basque government, in the confused aftermath of the raids, reported 1,654 dead and 889 wounded [PMO. The “Basque Government does not seem to be very confused]. Such a number roughly agreed with the testimony of British journalist George Steer [PMO: In English, the numbers had been taken straight from Steer], correspondent of *The Times* [and MI5 agent, in a role similar to that of Orwell], which estimated that 800 to 3,000 of 5,000 people perished in Guernica. These figures were adopted over the years by some commentators. These figures are represented in a majority of the literature from that period and up to the 1970s.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

In what follows, we finally begin to get at a coherent story:

The Nationalist junta gave a patently false description of the events [PMO: sure?], claiming that the destruction had been caused by Republicans burning the town as they fled, and seemed to have made no effort to establish an accurate number. At an extreme low, the Francoist newspaper *Arriba* claimed, on 30 January 1970, that there had only been twelve deaths.

The people of Gernika are tough, but not immortal. As humans, they suffer of TB and of many other illnesses, more in times of war and deprivation. Perhaps nobody died in the aerial raids, because the aerial raids were designed to bomb flat profitable but emptied real estate areas. As Wikipedia itself acknowledges, neither the oak tree nor the Meeting House beside it, or even the so important bridge, were touched by the bombs. Remember that we were told that the destruction of the bridge was the primary target of operation Rügen. Then, what on Earth were the Italian and German bombers doing bombing the city center of Gernika or Durango on behalf of the blue army, the defender of the Catholic Church? Churches and Catholics? What were they “carpeting” if the bridge and the roads (and the tree and the Meeting House) came out unscathed?

At this point, I think that it could shed a lot of light a comment that Miles makes on one of the papers of Lestrade on the bombings on Japan cities:

I think Lestrade is still being too generous. I would say his evidence here indicates the firebombing was also mostly faked. That is why the photos are paste-ups or false composites of some sort. Best guess is the US just cleared some slums in the big cities with the prior permission of the Japanese. As Lestrade says, they cleared those areas then bombed them out. No one was killed and nothing of value was lost. The US and Japanese developers then came in and gentrified those areas, making the usual profit. I would say the Japanese Air Force probably did a lot of the bombing themselves, since they were more familiar with the areas. Any mistakes made in that case would be their fault, not ours. This is why the US military never showed any guilt regarding these events: they knew the casualties were completely faked. Which would mean **the interviews with survivors were also completely faked**, as Lestrade is beginning to understand. The usual actors in make up, or people hired because they had been burned or maimed in some other way prior to the war. Like we saw in Boston where they hired paraplegics to pretend they had just had their limbs blown off.

With that in mind, let us return to the convoluted story of Wikipedia:

Issues with the originally released figures were raised following an appraisal of large scale bombing raids during the Second World War. A comparison of the Guernica figures with the figures of dead resulting from air attacks on major European cities during the Second World War exposed an **anomaly**.

An anomaly that strongly suggests that there was no mass murder of civilians.

James Corum uses the figure of forty tons of bombs dropped on Guernica, and calculates that if the figure of 1654 dead is accepted as accurate, then the raid caused 41 fatalities per ton of bombs. By way of comparison, the Dresden air raid during February 1945, which saw 3,431 tons of bombs dropped on the city, caused fewer deaths per ton of bombs: 7.2-10.2 fatalities per ton of bombs dropped. Corum, who ascribes the discrepancy between the high death toll reported at Guernica and in other cases such as Rotterdam to propaganda, goes on to say that for Guernica:

“...a realistic estimate on the high side of bombing effectiveness (7-12 fatalities per ton of bombs) would yield a figure of perhaps 300-400 fatalities in Guernica. This is certainly a bloody enough event, but reporting that a small town was bombed with a few hundred killed would not have had the same effect as reporting that a city was bombed with almost 1,700 dead.”

Indeed. So, we are in the realm of propaganda.

The first English-language media reports of the destruction in Guernica appeared two days later. George Steer, a reporter for *The Times*, who was covering the Spanish Civil War from inside the country, authored the first full account of events. Steer's reporting set the tone for much of the subsequent reportage, with part of his report stating “Guernica was not a military objective... The object of the bombardment was seemingly the demoralisation of the civil population and the destruction of the cradle of the Basque race”.

As I tried to explain above, Gernika was not the cradle of the “Basque Race”, whatever that may be. And the military judgment of Steer is not something that has much merit to be taken seriously.

Steer also pointed out German complicity in the action, citing three small bomb cases stamped with the German Imperial Eagle as evidence. Steer's report was syndicated to *The New York Times* and then worldwide, generating widespread shock, outrage, and fear<sup>[citation needed]</sup>.

Strangely enough, no copy of the Koram was found in the middle of the rubble. No, seriously: there was no need to look for imperial eagles or anything in the remains of the bombs, because it was known by everybody that the German and Italian air forces had sent planes to support the blue army.

Noel Monks, an Australian correspondent in Spain for the London *Daily Express*, was the first reporter to arrive on the scene after the bombing. He received the following cable from his office, “Berlin denies Guernica bombing. Franco says he had no planes up yesterday owing fog. Queipo de Llano says Reds dynamited Guernica during retreat.”

This is customarily called “scorched-earth” strategy. A very old tactic.

Overall, the impression generated was one which fed the widely held public **fear** of air attack which had been building throughout the 1930s, a fear which accurately anticipated that in the next war the aerial forces of warring nations would be able to wipe whole cities off the map.

Like Dresden or Hiroshima, for instance?

**Stanley Payne** observes that the presence of Steer was the reason for Guernica becoming a major media event; the town of Durango had been bombed a few days before and suffered higher casualties yet received comparatively little attention [PMO: why? Because Durango has no oak tree and no Meeting House. Surely, for the propaganda, Gernika is a much more appetizing dish]. **Steer was first on the scene** [PMO: Are we to believe that after what he wrote?] and was eager to dramatise the effect of bombing on cities in order to

encourage war preparedness [PMO: in Britain, I guess. The script of WW2 was to be staged soon]. **Steer inflated the number of casualties by 1000%.**<sup>[22]</sup>

Not a trifle. At least Wikipedia acknowledges that Steer was a big liar. But, after all, he was an MI5 agent on a mission.

After the attack, José Antonio Aguirre (president of the Basque government, an entity of uncertain juridical status, handled by MI5 Steer) published the following press note:<sup>[37]</sup>

"German airforces, following orders of the Spanish fascists [PMO: not of Richthofen? Aguirre does not seem to be very well informed], have bombed Guernica, setting the historical villa, that so much veneration has among the Basques, on fire. They wanted to hurt us in the most vulnerable spot of our patriotic sentiment, proving once again what Euzkadi [PMO: Basque Country in the terminology then used by the true-blue Basques] may expect from those who won't hesitate in destroying the sanctuary [PMO: sic] that commemorates centuries of our freedom and democracy... Before God and before history, which will judge us all, I assure you that the German planes [PMO: again, the Italians are left aside] bombed the population of Guernica, with unprecedented viciousness, for three hours, reducing the historical villa to ashes. They haunted women and children with machine gun fire, killing large numbers of them..."

Aguirre is parroting Steer in a grandiloquent language that oozes out falsehood. The question is whether he or Queipo de Llano was right (or perhaps neither) and whether the damage to Gernika had actually been made by the retreating PNV militias or by the Italo-German aviation. If the PNV had participated in the burning of Gernika, Aguirre would be laying a smokescreen on what his party militias had really done.

**The Republican statement counted 1645 deaths and 889 wounded**

Following the not very reliable Steer. In other words, war propaganda.

The attribution of responsibility is correct, **the cause of the bombing is probably wrong** [PMO: what on Earth was the cause of the bombing?] but reasonable at the time, and machine gun fire was indeed used to create fires in the village.

To what purpose? Do fires in village centers contribute anything to cut the communication lines of the enemy or to destroy the arms factories or to destroy bridges and roads?

**However, it contains lies and is intentionally misleading in various points.**

Quite. Probably among them, the previous statement about planes causing fires in the middle of villages with machine guns. If, as the official version says, the Italo-German planes dropped incendiary bombs, why did they resort to machine gunning to cause fires? What capacity of causing fire have machine guns? Or is Wikipedia telling us that incendiary bombs are not really incendiary? Let us continue with the "intentional lies":

**It suggests that the bombing was sustained through three hours, while three hours is the time between the first and last round among the three made on Guernica. The numbers of dead and injured have been now proven to be completely false** and impossible for the size of the locality.

Even Wikipedia acknowledges that the official version, that is, Steer's, is a lie. And , as far as I can see, not a very well crafted one.

**The intentional, individual chase of civilians by German planes has not been disproven (nor proven) but has some problematic points in it. Some prestigious foreign journalists [PMO: sic] like Hemingway, Orwell and Saint-Exupéry [PMO: not the most reliable sources in the world] reported it, but none of them actually saw it and have other proven inaccuracies in their accounts of the war. No material proofs of it had been found, and the streets of the village are far too narrow for the chase to take place.**

This is crucial and is something that struck my attention long ago, when as a child I heard the official version about Gernika and visited the town. There is not enough room for planes to fly



through the streets of Gernika, even less to chase running civilians through the streets to machine gun them. Then, if the planes did not machine gun the civilians within Gernika, the criminal deed had to be done outside it, and this is the next step that Wikipedia takes:

**It is possible that the chase of civilians happened outside of the urban area [PMO: Is Wikipedia taking for granted that there was a chase of civilians?] as the population was fleeing from the bombs [KMO: Wikipedia ES says that they were safe in the shelters and that this is why there were so few casualties], but a generalized chase and murder of the witnesses seems like a pointless waste of resources, or even a counter producing action, if the goal of the German air forces was, as it is now believed [PMO: by whom? By the way, the Italian air force is ignored once again], to extend demoralization and fear in the neighbouring villages.**

Was not the target of Richthofen, the de facto commander in chief of the blue army according to some of this mess of contradictory versions, to cut the communication lines of the enemy and to destroy the arms factories? Did the Italo-German planes really wait up in the air after dropping incendiary bombs until the civilians run away from the center of the town to engage in an orgy of machine gun fire against them? What good is it for the German and Italian planes, and even more, for the blue army, “Defensor fidei” to chase and machine gun fleeing Catholics? Would that make them fall in love with the PNV and hate the blues' bloodthirsty propaganda? Or were civilians used as human shields by the retiring army? Were they forced out of the bomb shelters at gun point? Or were a few bombs dropped on the outskirts of the city and the guns of the retiring army the excuse to evacuate the town and leave it empty and ready for the bombing, as Miles suggested in his comment to Lestrade? In light of the mess of versions I have just seen and of Miles' comments, I lean towards the latter option.

**On 27 April, the day after the bombing, Nationalist general Gonzalo Queipo de Llano broadcast a statement through Union Radio Seville accusing the local population and “the reds” of having deliberately burned and dynamited Guernica, while calling international reporters liars. Among the facts that he provided to prove his version of events were the “absolute absence of German airforces” and the bad weather.**<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

The local population burning their own homes? I cannot see how that can make any sense. Or did Queipo de Llano refer to the local militiamen of the PNV and its allies? Though it seems that the German and Italian planes took off, it seems unlikely that their mission was to bomb the urban center and machine gun civilians. The fact that they left the bridge, the arms factories and the communication lines untouched strongly suggest that the red army was generously handing over the war infrastructure to its enemy. This in turn suggests that the reds and the blues were playing in the same team. A very significant fact in that regard is what happened in Bilbao when, finally, Mola's army took it on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1937. The official version is that the Communists wanted to dynamite the industries of Bilbao, but that the PNV stopped them. The outcome was that, like in Gernika, but on a much bigger scale, the blue army was handed over an intact invaluable industrial infrastructure. That signaled the defeat of the “Republic”. By the way, according to the official version, the PNV fought the communists and prevented them from dynamiting the industries of Bilbao because they expected to recover them soon. Did they really expect to hand over the arms to the enemy to recover them? This does not make any sense.

Otherwise, if the Italian and German planes had any mission, it was to bomb flat profitable real estate. I think that a sensible description of what happened would go on the following lines. The Italo-German aviation did not machine gun any civilian. They dropped some incendiary bombs, to cause panic. Then, the militias of the PNV and associates, at gun point, forced the civilians out of the shelters. The civilians run away in panic, and the Italo-German aviation then either fired blanks or shot passing birds. The goal was to empty the historic town. Once it had been emptied,

the Italo-German aviation started to drop incendiary and not incendiary bombs to bomb flat the valuable real state that the operation wanted to clear. The reds and the blues shared in the spoils.

**On 29 April, in view of the outrage caused by the bombing in European public opinion, Franco's propaganda service issued an official statement parroting [Queipo de] Llano's claims. This theory found favor in conservative British journals, including *The Times* which even put in doubt the testimony from its own correspondent, George Steer.**<sup>[40]</sup>

Steer had gone too far and to keep some credibility even *The Times* had to put in doubt the testimony of its correspondent Steer.

**While Republican forces had pursued a scorched earth strategy in the past (notably in Irun, which was dynamited), Steer's reporting was supported by other journalists who witnessed the same levels of destruction [PMO: as reliable as Steer?]. Furthermore, there were objective proofs available at the time of the falsehood of [Queipo de] Llano's version: the bad weather he mentioned happened hours after the attack had been perpetrated, and the city's weaponry as well as the bridge to get to it were among the few buildings which had not been destroyed.**<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

The last part of this sentence lends support to Queipo de Llano. Perhaps Queipo de Llano was lying in some part of his speeches because the blues and the reds were to share in the spoils. Again, the fact that the key war industries were as matter of fact handed over to the enemy strongly suggests that the PNV and its associates were not practicing the tactic of scorched earth, contrary to Queipo de Llano, but handing over assets to themselves under the pretense of a war. They were also providing themselves with an invaluable propaganda asset, which they keep using abundantly even today, as a smokescreen to cover-up their own “operations”. They would forever be the “victims”, which would give them the right to do anything they please. Whoever opposes the poor victims is a hater and a Fascist.

We were told that the goal of the raid was to destroy the communication lines of the enemy and, in particular, the bridge, weren't we? It happens that the bridge and, what is more, the city's arms factories came out unscathed from the supposedly infernal bombing. The German and Italian planes may have stirred a lot of dust and made a lot of rubble by “carpeting”. That means chaos and terror that, together with the guns of the “defenders” of the town pointed at the terrified population in the shelters may have been very effective to empty the town. Dresden II?

**The Germans denied any involvement, as well. Von Richthofen claimed that the Germans had a target that was a bridge over the Mundaka River, which was on the edge of town. It was chosen for the fact that it would cut off the fleeing Republican troops. However, even though the Germans had the best airmen and the best planes in Spain, none of their bombs hit the presumed target.**

If the best airmen in the best planes fail to hit their primary target, I would not go to war with such company. If I had been the “generalísimo”, I would have dismissed the whole useless German (and Italian) bunch on the spot (together with their commanders, of course), and if they had really hurt the people that my propaganda was saying that I was defending, I would also have dismissed them on the spot, and, if possible, inflict some military punishment on them for hurting my campaign. By the way, how good (or, rather, bad) were the airmen and the planes who were not the best, the ones who were not sent to Spain, but who fought the Second World War? Was this really the best that the Italian and German air forces had to offer?

**Some Nationalist reporters suggested that the town had been bombed from the air, but by Republican airplanes.**

This could make sense, but the Republicans that is, the reds, claim that they had no planes, and I cannot see what good that would have been for them. Therefore, it makes sense to hypothesize that the town was damaged from the air and from the ground in turns.

The bombs were said to have been made in the Basque country and the explosions happened because of dynamite stored in the sewers. Another theory by Nationalists was that there were a "few bomb fragments found" in Guernica, but the damage was mainly caused by Basque incendiaries [PMO: rather, PNV's]. Franco's regime minimized the bombing for decades. In 1970, newspaper *Arriba* claimed that there had only been twelve deaths during the bombing raid.

If there was any victim of the bombings, it was probably terrified innocent Catholics, and who cares about spare money if the real estate business is going to deliver generous profits? Wikipedia forgets to mention that Queipo de Llano, when attributing the damage in Gernika (and Durango) to the strategy of scorched earth, gave some true examples known to everybody that smelled of that: Irun, a much bigger town than Gernika, or Eibar, an important center of production of weaponry, are two good examples. However, after what we have seen so far, it is not to be ruled out that Irun and Eibar were, equally, presents for the "enemy" and that blues and reds shared in the spoils.

**The attempted cover-up did more harm than good.**

According to what has been said, there are two cover-ups. It seems, rather, that the two sides are lying. This makes them friends, not enemies.

The uproar irritated even Hitler, who insisted that Franco's government absolved the Condor Legion from any responsibility. Ironically, the whole affair may have redounded to his advantage, for it had the effect of heightening concern about the destructiveness of the Luftwaffe [PMO: Really? After the brilliant performance of his best airmen and planes?], a fear that encouraged appeasement of Germany. In the aftermath, Franco reiterated his earlier orders that no open town, without troops or military industry, may be bombed without a direct order from the Generalissimo or the commanding general of the air force.<sup>[22]</sup>

Which means that Gernika (and Durango, and the rest of the towns allegedly bombed to murder civilians) were bombed without orders from the generalísimo or any of his generals; in particular, Mola. It is instructive to compare the bombing of Gernika with that of Durango, which, as we have seen, in sharp contrast to Gernika, was on the way to Bilbao and was the key position that the Mola plan required to take Bilbao. Wikipedia:

The bombing of Durango took place on 31 March 1937, during the [Spanish Civil War](#). On 31 March 1937 the Nationalists started their offensive against the Republican held province of Biscay. As part of the offensive the [Aviazione Legionaria](#) and the [Legion Condor](#) bombed [Durango](#), a town of 10,000 inhabitants that was also a **key road and railway junction** behind the frontline. Around 250 people are believed to have died in the bombing.

So far, a similar story to that of Gernika.

Durango, a town of 10,000 inhabitants, was a road and railway junction between [Bilbao](#) and the front [PMO: unlike Gernika]. By bombing the road and infrastructure in the town, the Republican forces would be prevented from sending reinforcements from Bilbao. It would also ensure that the Basque and Republican troops couldn't retreat in an orderly fashion in order to fight another day.

The story now makes better sense, but it looks very much like a copycat of Gernika.

Despite the importance of Durango as a transportation junction, the town had no air defences, and there were only a few Republican [fighter planes](#) to be found in the Basque region.<sup>[3]</sup>

Same story yet once again. There were no air defenses to let the planes do their job of bombing flat profitable real estate.

On 31 March, German and Italian transport planes modified to carry bombs (German [Ju 52](#) and Italian [Savoia-Marchetti SM.81](#)) from the [Condor Legion](#)<sup>[1]</sup> and the [Aviazione Legionaria](#) bombed the town in relays. Two churches were bombed during the celebration of mass, killing 14 nuns and the officiated priest.<sup>[3]</sup> Furthermore, [Heinkel He 51](#) fighters strafed fleeing civilians. Altogether, around 250 civilians (Thomas: 248; <sup>[1]</sup> Beevor: 250<sup>[3]</sup> and Preston: 258<sup>[4]</sup>) died in the attack.

Gernika II.

On 28 April, Durango fell to Nationalist side. While the local road junction meant that Durango was a legitimate target for an air attack and the bombing did not contravene the laws of war as they were at the time, foreign observers were shocked at the carnage. The Nationalists denied responsibility for the bombing, claiming that the priest and the nuns who died in the bombing were killed and burned by the *reds*.

Tough this is the subject of another paper, these horror stories of reds locking Catholics and burning them alive deserves a closer look.

[Queipo de Llano](#) said that: “our planes bombed military targets in Durango, and later communists and socialists locked up the priests and nuns, shooting without pity and burning the churches”.<sup>[3]</sup> The bombing of Durango was to a certain extent overlooked historically [PMO: why? Did it reveal too much?]. Instead, it was the [bombing of Guernica](#), a similar [PMO: I would say copycat] air attack that took place four weeks later, that came to symbolize the horrors of modern [aerial warfare](#) in the public consciousness.

Wikipedia ES has an interesting testimony of Richthofen that, in case of being authentic, makes a very interesting point:

30 de abril de 1937. (...) Se sigue hacia Durango. Pequeña y bonita ciudad, con hermosos palacios de nobles. Tras un doble bombardeo de los italianos tiene un aspecto horrible. **Es como si las bombas hubiesen buscado precisamente las iglesias.** El gran templo, en el cual en ese justo momento se celebraba misa mayor, recibió un mínimo de seis bombas; una iglesia conventual (convento que es cierto que era un cuartel rojo) [sic], cuatro al menos. Sólo están en pie los muros. En el templo mayor hubo muchos (se dice que más de 150) muertos. Por razones de propaganda, los rojos no han desescombrado absolutamente nada.

Here is a hopefully decent translation into English:

April 30th, 1937. (...) The march towards Durango goes on. It is a small and nice city, with beautiful palaces of the nobility. After the double bombing of the Italians it has an horrible aspect. **It is as if the bombs had sought precisely the churches.** On the grand temple, in which, at that precise moment, the Main Mass (Misa Mayor) was being celebrated, at least six bombs fell; on a convent church (which, by the way, had been turned into a red army quarter), at least four. Only the walls remain. Many died in the grand temple (people say about 150). For propaganda reasons, the reds have not cleaned up anything.

Summing up: both sides are lying. This has a major and inconvenient implication, which is that the enemies were in actual fact not so. Otherwise, the obliteration of the war targets by the “best” airmen and planes of the Italian and German air forces strongly suggests that the destruction of the town was carried out by two different forces: 1) the retiring red army, made up mostly by PNV militias the mission of which was to empty the towns. The occasion naturally lent itself to expand the cover-up and make up terror stories about mass murder in order to terrorize the general population and divert its attention from the wicked intentions of their “defenders”. The blue army would be an army of bloodthirsty murderers, and the PNV, the main force of the red army in the Basque Country, innocent victims targeted simply for being Basque; 2) the Italian and German airplanes completed the work of the militias once the town was ready. As I said, whether the blue and the red army were in fact the same army pretending to fight one another is a hypothesis that cannot be dismissed out of hand.

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No paper on the bombing of Gernika worth its salt can go without dealing with the famous painting of Picasso. To this day there is a hot debate about it, but I think that the debate can be summarized in the following questions:

1) Is the Guernica an homage to Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, a bullfighter with whom Picasso was close friends and who died in 1934 because of he was gored by a bull, and not to the “carnage” of Gernika? Or did Picasso paint the painting as an artistic expression of the horror he had felt himself when he heard about the carnage in Gernika, regardless of the tragic death of his friend Sánchez Mejías?

2) Did Picasso paint the Guernica from scratch or did he modify what he already had about a previous painting dedicated to his friend Ignacio Sánchez Mejías?

3) Did he paint the Guernica for money or because of the horror he had felt after the carnage?

Before dealing with these questions, I think that it is helpful to have a quick look at Ignacio Sánchez Mejías:

Ignacio Sánchez Mejías (6 June 1891, [Seville](#)-13 August 1934, [Madrid](#)) was a Spanish [matador](#). After his death following a goring ([cornada](#)) in the Plaza of [Manzanares](#), he was memorialized by several poets of the [Generation of '27](#), notably by [Federico García Lorca](#) in his “*Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*” (“Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías”, sometimes translated under the title “Lament for the Death of a Bullfighter”).

After a few years away from bullfighting, from 1929 to 1934:

In 1934 Sánchez Mejías returned to bullfighting. In August of that year he replaced [Domingo Ortega](#) in [Manzanares](#), where he was gored in the right thigh. He would not allow the local doctor to operate on him, asking instead to be returned to Madrid. He was transported there by ambulance. Two days later, he contracted [gangrene](#) and died.

Wikipedia does not mention Picasso among the friends of Sánchez Mejías, but there are many sources that do. The contrary would have been strange.

From <https://redinvestigadoresidentidadesnacionales.wordpress.com/2022/04/16/ignacio-sanchez-mejias-los-toros-y-el-guernica-de-picasso/>

The bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, man of culture, was friend of poets and writers of the generation of 27. He had even written and staged some plays. He also was friends with sculptors like Mariano Benlliure and painters like Picasso, Martínez de León, Roberto Domingo and others. He was patron of the literary prize of the Ateneo de Sevilla, and when the fatal happening ended his life, all his friends threw themselves into devoting to him letters of remembrance and admiration.

The article goes on:

It will take a long time for such a clear Andalusian, so rich in adventure, to be born, if ever. And if poets and writers poured ink into his vivid memory, a painter, Pablo Ruiz Picasso, a native of Malaga and Andalusian at heart, also wanted to pay his own tribute and **made a sketch to dedicate a painting to him**. However, everything remained a project due to the circumstances in Spain in 1935 and 1936, the years before the Spanish Civil War. In 1937, **the Government of the Republic commissioned Picasso** to create a work for the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World’s Fair, and the artist presented a painting based on the sketch he had devised to dedicate to his friend Sánchez Mejías, which featured a bull and other bullfighting motifs. From the sketch to commemorate his deceased bullfighter friend, a brilliant painting of universal acclaim emerged.

I would not label the “Guernica” as a “brilliant painting”, but this is not my point here. The point is that Picasso did not let a good opportunity of making money and getting fame go away and recycled what he had done for Sánchez Mejías in 1934 into the “Guernica” in 1937. What did he

get in exchange? Money, but before taking up that issue, let us check other more explicit sources. I translate directly from Spanish, as the reader has the reference of the original in Spanish:

From <<https://www.elcorreoweb.es/toros/2019/01/12/guernica-llanto-muerte-ignacio-sanchez-104669675.html>>

The writer Aquilino Duque is one of those who corroborates this current of opinion, stating that the work “is nothing more than a profit-making adaptation of the painting, collage, cardboard, poster, or whatever it may be called, with which the artist intended to join in the national mourning for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías.” This is the same opinion that other writers have expressed, such as Francisco Aguado, Joselito's authoritative biographer [PMO: Joselito is regarded as an epoch-making matador in Spain], and the Malaga-based essayist and researcher José Morente, reaffirming the idea that Picasso “would have taken advantage of some sketches made three years earlier, in 1934, on the occasion of the death in the Manzanares bullring of Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, the versatile bullfighter and figurehead of the entire Generation of ‘27, to develop, based on those forgotten and neglected sketches, the painting commissioned by the Republican government.

Wikipedia EN does not say much about the “economic side”, so to speak, of the “Guernica”, but Wikipedia ES does. What it says is not lacking in interest:

In early January 1937, at his home on the rue de la Boétie in Paris, Picasso received a visit from a Spanish delegation consisting of the Director General of Fine Arts, Josep Renau, the architect Luis Lacasa, and the writers Juan Larrea, Max Aub, and José Bergamín. The visitors' purpose was to request Picasso's collaboration for the Spanish pavilion at the planned Paris International Exposition. (...) The commission given to Picasso by the Spanish government, a mural covering an area of 11x4 meters, was delayed by the painter for several months. (...) To complete the enormous painting, which did not fit in Picasso's usual studio, the photographer Dora Maar, with whom he was in a relationship and who lived next door on the rue de Savoie, obtained a studio at 7 rue des Grands-Augustins; Picasso rented it and used its spacious attic as a studio.

As Josep Lluís Sert, the architect who designed the Spanish pavilion at the International Exposition, noted: “Picasso was paid, like everyone else, only for the colors, the canvases, the stretchers, the frames, and the transportation -minimal amounts. **The work itself was a gift, made as a donation from the artist,** because everyone had offered to collaborate with the Republic.”

Not so fast:

It is known, however, that after an initial payment of 50,000 francs, Picasso received a second payment of 150,000 francs from the Spanish Republic as expenses [PMO: which makes a total of 200,000 francs of 1937. Not peanuts]. A note signed by Max Aub, dated May 28, 1937, and addressed to Ambassador Luis Araquistáin, confirms this payment. According to this note, the painter refused to accept any figure, and the payment finally received was purely symbolic, intended to cover Picasso's expenses. However, the symbolic nature of the indicated sum has been questioned, which, according to De la Puente, amounts to “15 percent of the total cost of the Spanish pavilion, **about nine times more than the highest price Picasso had achieved until then for the highest-paid works of his art**”. In any case, it would be the receipt for this payment that decades later would allow the Spanish government to claim ownership of the painting.

As I said, it seems that Picasso was not one of those who let a good opportunity go away. His “gifts” carried a price tag. The government of the Republic had handsomely paid for the generous “donation” of Picasso and wanted back the “work of art”. Probably because they expected to get more than what they had invested.

Wikipedia adds an interesting section in which “survivors” of the horrors of Gernika join hands with “survivors” of Dresden and Hiroshima.

On 13 February 2003, during the commemoration of the 58th anniversary of the [Bombing of Dresden](#), inhabitants of [Dresden](#), Germany, including survivors of the firestorm of 1945, joined with witnesses of the bombing of Guernica to issue an appeal to the people of the world:

“As our television sets show bombers preparing for [war against Iraq](#) [PMO: supposedly, more bombings of civilian population], we survivors of Guernica and Dresden recall our own helplessness and horror when we were flung into the inferno of bombing -we saw people killed. Suffocated. Crushed. Incinerated. Mothers trying to protect their children with only their bodies. Old people with no strength left to flee from the flames. These pictures are still alive in our memory, and our accounts capture indelibly what we went through.

For decades we -and survivors from many other nations- have been scarred by the horror, loss and injuries we experienced in the wars of the 20th century. Today we see that the beginnings of the 21st century are also marked by suffering and destruction. On behalf of all the victims of war throughout the world we express our sympathy and solidarity with all those affected by the terror of [11 September in the US](#) and the war in Afghanistan.

This does not look good. Note that it sells 911 as real, and Dresden and Hiroshima as mass murder of civilians. There is nothing like being a victim, and much better if one is a “survivor”.

On 26 April 2007, [Dr. Tadatoshi Akiba](#), mayor of [Hiroshima](#) and president of [Mayors for Peace](#), compared the experience of Guernica to Hiroshima:

“Human beings have often sought to give concrete form to our powerful collective longing for peace. After World War I, that longing led to the League of Nations and numerous rules and taboos designed to govern warfare itself. Of these, the most important was the proscription against attacking and killing civilian non-combatants even in times of war. However, the second half of the twentieth century has seen most of those taboos broken. Guernica was the point of departure, and Hiroshima is the ultimate symbol. We must find ways to communicate to future generations the history of horror that began with Guernica... In this sense, the leadership of those here in Guernica who seek peace and have worked hard to bring about this memorial ceremony is profoundly meaningful. The solidarity we feel today derives from our shared experience of the horror of war, and this solidarity can truly lead us toward a world beyond war.”

World beyond war? Is that why NATO has forced its members to raise military spending to 5% of GDP?