

Name _____



Spanish Civil War

By Jane Runyon

The years between 1930 and 1939 were a time of turmoil for the people of Spain. In the early years of the decade, they were led by a Republican government. There were some citizens, however, who were unhappy with how the government was being run. One such man was General Francisco Franco.



Francisco "El Caudillo" Franco

General Franco established a Nationalist organization. He set up his group in Morocco across the Strait of Gibraltar from Spain in Africa. He and his followers were patient. They were waiting for the right time to return to their Spanish homeland to claim the government as their own. That time arrived in 1936.

Spain became a divided country. Spanish cities such as Cadiz, Saragossa, Seville, and Burgos declared their allegiance to General Franco and his Nationalists. The cities of Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, and Valencia lined up on the side of the Republicans.

General Franco knew that if he were going to be able to overthrow the established Spanish government, he was going to need help from outside his own country. He accepted help from Adolph Hitler in Nazi Germany and Benito Mussolini in Italy. Hitler sent a legion from his Luftwaffe, or air force. Mussolini sent 50,000 Italian volunteers. It wasn't widely publicized that these volunteers were from the Italian military. They knew how to fight. It didn't take the Nationalists long to take control of the border between Spain and Portugal. This was a very important supply route which put the Republicans in a very bad situation.

General Franco made the decision to split the Republican forces in order to defeat them. The Battle of Gaudalajara proved a costly defeat to the Nationalist forces. But they continued to pursue their goal. In late 1937, they were able to capture the city of Bilbao. The next year brought the Nationalists more success. By the end of the year, they had captured almost all of the important Spanish cities they had

sought except Madrid.

In 1939, the Russians, who had supported the Republicans, withdrew from Spain. The Republicans were forced to surrender. Valencia fell in January and Madrid in March. The Republican government officially surrendered on April 1.

The war in Spain had been costly. Official figures list the death of 500,000 people. Most experts estimate the actual loss of lives was closer to one million.

The Spanish Civil War also introduced a war tactic which became widely used in World War II. Hitler used the Spanish Civil War as an experiment for his air force. No one had ever deliberately bombed a city before. Hitler ordered his air force to bomb the Spanish city of Guernica on April 27, 1937. He deemed his experiment such a rousing success that it became part of his war plan just a few short years later in World War II. One of Pablo Picasso's most famous paintings shows his interpretation of the destruction caused by this bombing. The painting is entitled simply "Guernica."

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Questions

- _____ 1. Madrid is in Portugal.
 - A. True
 - B. False

- _____ 2. What kind of government did Spain have in the early 1930s?
 - A. Independent
 - B. Republican
 - C. Nationalist
 - D. Democratic

- _____ 3. Who led the Nationalists?
 - A. Francisco Franco
 - B. Pablo Picasso
 - C. Adolph Hitler
 - D. Benito Mussolini