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The first
modern conflict

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TEENAGE REBEL
Marina Ginestà, a 17-year-old
Republican translator and
photographer, poses with a rifle
on the rooftop terrace of
Barcelona's Hotel Colón



THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

How a brutal three-year conflict inspired international uproar and ushered in a new era of fascism

Francisco Franco marched into Madrid on 28 March 1939, following a two-year siege on the city. After a failed coup descended into one of the most devastating civil wars in history, his right-wing Nationalist rebels had prevailed against the Spanish Republican government. The raising of the white flag that day, after up to a million Spaniards had been killed, signalled the start of a 40-year fascist dictatorship.

TENSIONS BREWING

In 1936, Spain was in trouble. The Great Depression hit the country hard, causing major unemployment and internal strife. The population was severed in two. On the one hand were the Nationalists, a collection of landowners, businessmen and military figures who strongly aligned with the Catholic Church; on the other, the Republicans – a diverse bunch of urban workers, agricultural labourers and the educated middle class, whose beliefs were polarised across the political spectrum.

Such turmoil was reflected in government. Beginning with the abdication of the King in 1931, a series of crises plagued the state – most notably, the 1934 miners' strike of Asturias. This lasted nearly two weeks, until it was crushed by expert troops led by General Francisco Franco.

After a coalition of left-wing parties narrowly won the 1936 elections, Franco took matters into his own hands. Staging a coup in Morocco with the army's assistance, a week later his Nationalists controlled a third of Spain. Though he only captured a few cities and failed to seize power completely, Spain was already set on a collision course, and the Civil War began.

Joining Franco in his well-planned uprising were nearly 100,000 military men, as well as



HEARTS AND MINDS
LEFT: A Republican poster claims that winning the war was the top priority for the left-wing coalition
ABOVE: Fascist stylings are visible on this propaganda image, celebrating 'great freedom'

GETTY X3, REX/SHUTTERSTOCK XI



IN PICTURES THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

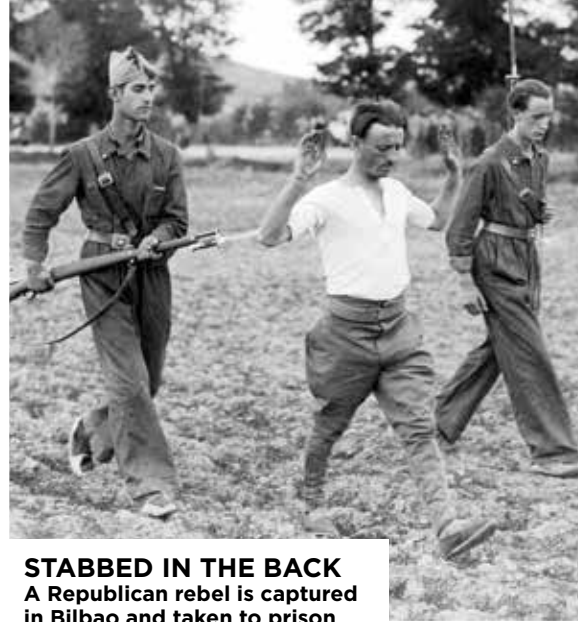
almost half of the civilian population. They held a number of advantages over the Republican side. First and foremost, they were much better trained and equipped, as Franco commanded over half the soldiers, tanks and weapons of the entire country. Additionally, their devotion to the fascist cause and the fact they were largely united by a single ideology served them well in comparison to the conflicted Republicans, whose beliefs on the political spectrum ranged from full-blown anarchy to moderate centrism.

Attracting support from the public – not just politically inclined men, but women and children too – was key to winning the war. The Republicans counted on their traditional supporters to fight for the cause, portraying it as a struggle for freedom against military tyranny. Taking advantage of widespread fear of communism at the time, the Nationalists called their opponents the ‘reds’, and claimed that the faction was a threat to Christianity itself. Such powerful propaganda easily won the allegiance of wealthier members of Spanish society, but also a considerable number of ordinary people.

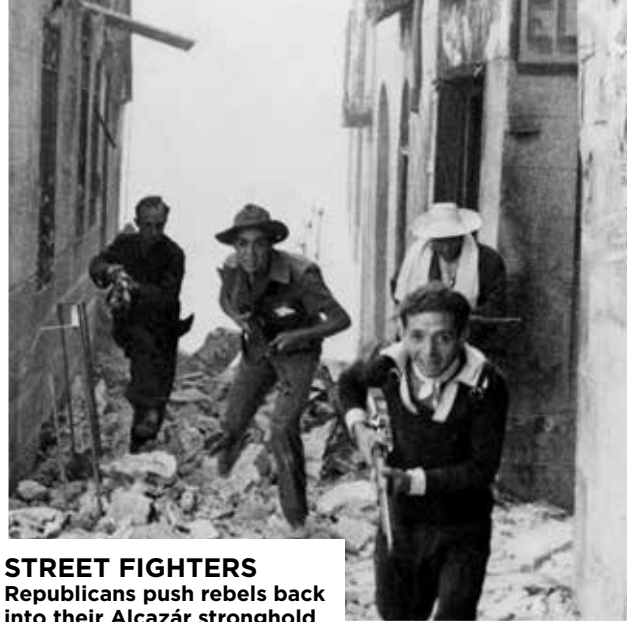
INTERNATIONAL SCALE

Meanwhile, the rest of Europe eagerly watched events unfold. Britain and France, anxious about the rise of fascism on the continent,

ALAMY, XI, BRIDGEMAN IMAGES XI, GETTY X3, PRESS ASSOCIATION XI



STABBED IN THE BACK
A Republican rebel is captured in Bilbao and taken to prison



STREET FIGHTERS
Republicans push rebels back into their Alcazár stronghold



WOMEN AT WAR
Male and female Republican militia shoot at the Alcazár of Toledo



BRIGADIERS
British men and women who volunteered to help in Spain

RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

Republicans shoot a statue of Jesus in an act of resistance to Catholicism



**“I AM RESPONSIBLE
ONLY TO GOD
AND HISTORY”**
FRANCISCO FRANCO



THE MORAL HIGH GROUND
Government militia defend Aragon, a place of great strategic importance

MAKING A MARTYR
 Photographer Robert Capa supposedly captures the moment when a Republican fighter is killed



PEN AND SWORD
 Ernest Hemingway (centre) smokes with a pair of Republican soldiers

© Robert Capa © International Center of Photography

**IN PICTURES
 THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR**



CITY UNDER SIEGE
 Bullet holes pierced many homes and public buildings in Madrid

© Robert Capa © International Center of Photography

tried to get other European countries to pledge non-interference with the conflict. This was signed by the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany and Italy, and ignored by all three. Hitler and Mussolini, keen to see another country fall to fascism, immediately sent financial and military support to the Nationalists. The USSR, to a lesser degree, did the same for the Republicans.

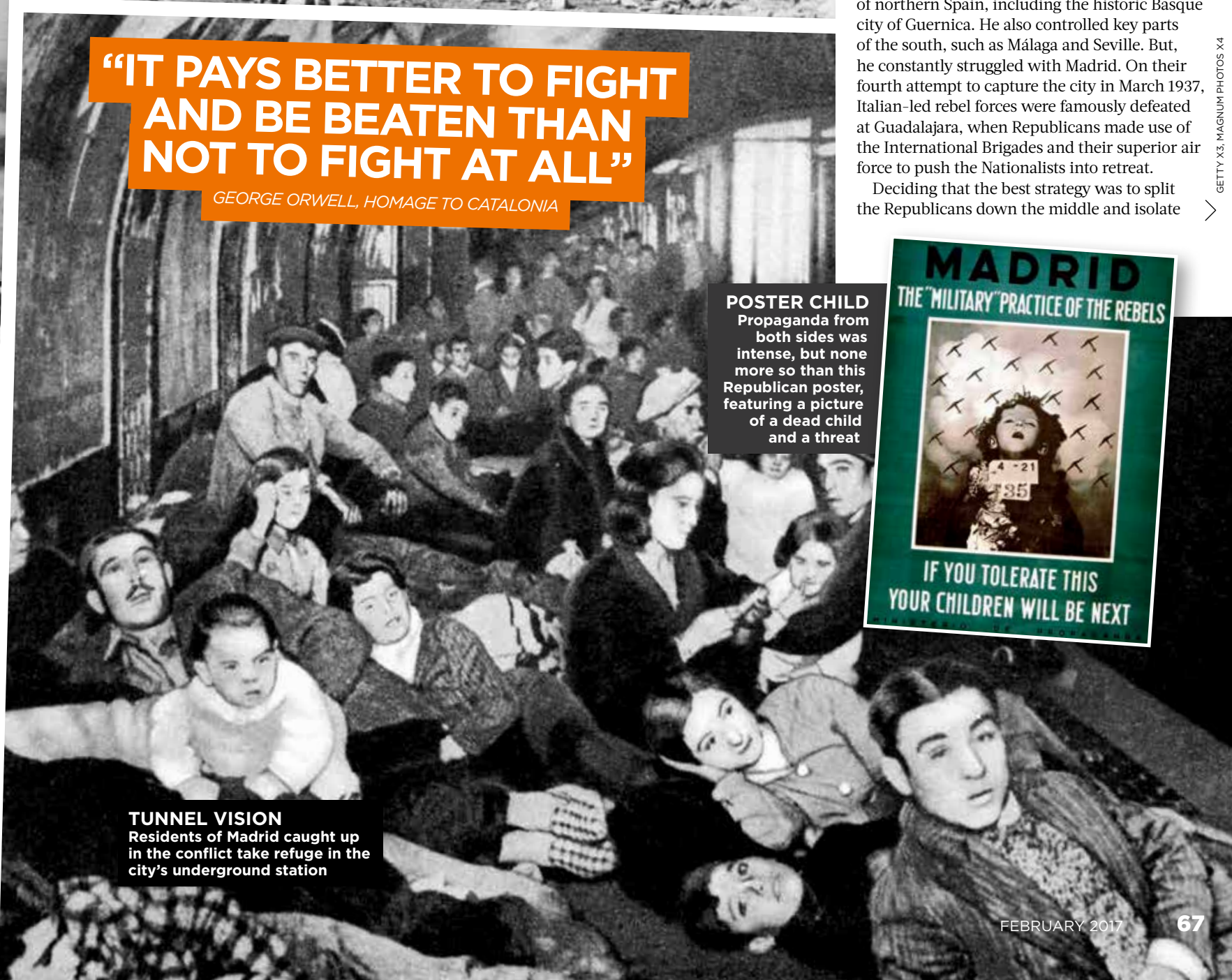
As news of the conflict spread, volunteers keen to stop the Nationalist rebels flocked to Spain to fight alongside the Republicans. Known as the International Brigades, people from France, Romania, Mexico, Canada, the US, Britain and even the Philippines joined the war effort. Among them were several well-known figures, like George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway. Though great for morale, the volunteers were often ill-prepared for conflict, and weren't of much tactical importance.

And so the war raged on. Setting up a rival government and designating himself 'El Caudillo' (the chief), Franco started to take most of northern Spain, including the historic Basque city of Guernica. He also controlled key parts of the south, such as Málaga and Seville. But, he constantly struggled with Madrid. On their fourth attempt to capture the city in March 1937, Italian-led rebel forces were famously defeated at Guadalajara, when Republicans made use of the International Brigades and their superior air force to push the Nationalists into retreat.

Deciding that the best strategy was to split the Republicans down the middle and isolate

"IT PAYS BETTER TO FIGHT AND BE BEATEN THAN NOT TO FIGHT AT ALL"

GEORGE ORWELL, HOMAGE TO CATALONIA



TUNNEL VISION
 Residents of Madrid caught up in the conflict take refuge in the city's underground station

ART FOR POLITICS' SAKE
 Inspired by the horrors of Guernica, Pablo Picasso stands in front of his famous work



© David Seymour/Magnum Photos

TRAGIC PRECEDENT
 Guernica was bombed by fascist Italian and German planes, one of the first airstrikes against civilians in history



POSTER CHILD
 Propaganda from both sides was intense, but none more so than this Republican poster, featuring a picture of a dead child and a threat

GETTY X3, MAGNUM PHOTOS X4

THE BITTER END
Republicans fight to the last breath at the Battle of Teruel, which took place during one of the harshest Spanish winters



© Robert Capa © International Center of Photography



WAR-TORN LAND
ABOVE: Francisco Franco walks with Hitler, saluting his German allies during World War II
LEFT: The Generalissimo watches his victory parade through Madrid from a high vantage point
BELOW: Refugees flee across the border for their lives, taking only what they could carry. They would be placed in squalid French internment camps

Madrid, the rebels invaded Catalonia. Barcelona fell in January 1939, and the next month, the British and French governments officially recognised the Franco regime. Only Madrid was left, and the Caudillo would only accept an unconditional surrender.

A week after the final offensive on the city began, Franco proclaimed his victory on 1 April 1939, announcing his control of all Spain. Elimination of the Nationalists' opponents began immediately, by executing at least 30,000 Republicans, and imprisoning many more. Others became refugees, some half-a-million fleeing to the comparative safety of pre-war France. Twentieth-century Spain would be defined by the Francoist regime. Banning all other political parties and establishing concentration camps, the dictator ruled with an iron fist. Somewhat ironically, a couple of decades into his regime, Franco started receiving support from Western countries in the Cold War as a strong force against communism, eventually gaining admittance into the United Nations and NATO.

Franco personally nominated his successor, King Juan Carlos I, after having restored the monarchy and proclaimed himself leader in 1947. Following the Caudillo's death in 1975, Juan Carlos set about restoring democracy to the country. In 1977, the Spanish people went to their first election in 40 years, dealing a fatal blow to Franco's legacy of dictatorship, death and destruction. ○

GETTY X3, MAGNUM PHOTOS X2



VICIOUS VICTORY
Spanish Nationalists celebrate their victory in Madrid, welcomed into the city by many supporters

**“THE SPANISH PEOPLE
WILL RISE AGAIN
AGAINST TYRANNY”**

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, ON THE AMERICAN DEAD IN SPAIN



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