

# Thousands in Guernica, Spain draw link between 1937 fascist bombings and Gaza genocide

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The sadistic, psychopathic character of the Netanyahu-Biden campaign of mass extermination in Gaza emerges more clearly and horribly with every passing day. In the face of the outrage of hundreds of millions, the murderers continuously outdo themselves. No crime is beyond these forces.

The social *and moral* global divide between the ruling classes, on the one hand, and the mass of the population, on the other, has become absolutely unbridgeable. Rosa Luxemburg's watchword "socialism or barbarism" has never been this urgent and irrefutable.

In Guernica, in northern Spain, on Friday, several thousand people formed an enormous mosaic with their bodies, depicting, as one commentator explained, "the pain of the victims of Israeli attacks on Gaza and the Palestinian flag." The representation included a reference to Pablo Picasso's famed anti-war painting, *Guernica*, as did the poster advertising the event.

The event was organized by the Guernica-Palestine Citizens' Initiative, which includes trade union and various political organizations. It was staged in the Basque town's market square, where in April 1937, planes sent by Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy bombed civilians, killing hundreds, in support of Gen. Franco and his fascist forces during the Spanish Civil War.

The attack was considered to be the first large-scale military air assault against defenseless civilians, and it horrified world public opinion. "Never before in modern warfare had noncombatants been slaughtered in such numbers, and by such means," wrote one commentator.

Picasso's work was only one of many artistic responses to an event that provided the world an indication of the horrors to come.

In 2003, UN officials made history of a sort by covering

up a tapestry reproduction of Picasso's work, which hung outside the Security Council chamber at UN headquarters in New York, during US Secretary of State Colin Powell's February 5 presentation of the American case for war against Iraq.

Powell's intervention, which he later admitted was nothing but a pack of lies, served as justification for the subsequent bloody, neo-colonial invasion and occupation of the Middle Eastern country. "As the council gathered to hear Powell on Wednesday, workers placed a blue curtain and flags of the council's member countries in front of the tapestry," we commented at the time.

"Aside from its general evocation of anti-war sentiment," the WSWS pointed out,

Picasso's painting threatened to speak to historical parallels that the Bush administration and UN officials were clearly determined that the media or the public should not make. For an entire generation the bombing of Guernica and Picasso's interpretation of the event signified the barbarity of fascism and the widespread determination to resist its violence and brutality.

In its statement regarding the December 8 human mosaic-protest, the Guernica-Palestine Citizens' Initiative insisted that the "world and history must not accept a new Guernica" and that "Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people." The Initiative called on the international community to share the suffering of the Palestinian people and stop the massacre.

In 1937, British journalist George Steer wrote this account of the bombing of Guernica for the *Times*:

Guernica, the most ancient town of the Basques and the centre of their cultural tradition, was completely destroyed yesterday afternoon by insurgent air raiders. The bombardment of this open town far behind the lines occupied precisely three hours and a quarter, during which a powerful fleet of aeroplanes consisting of three German types, Junkers and Heinkel bombers and Heinkel fighters, did not cease unloading on the town bombs weighing from 1,000lb. downwards and, it is calculated, more than 3,000 two-pounder aluminium incendiary projectiles. The fighters, meanwhile, plunged low from above the centre of the town to machine-gun those of the civilian population who had taken refuge in the fields. ...

was continuous, ceasing only with the approach of dusk at 7.45. The whole town of 7,000 inhabitants, plus 3,000 refugees, was slowly and systematically pounded to pieces. ...

Steer described the tactics of the bombers

...which may be of interest to students of the new military science ... First, small parties of aeroplanes threw heavy bombs and hand grenades all over the town, choosing area after area in orderly fashion. Next came fighting machines which swooped low to machine-gun those who ran in panic from dugouts, some of which had already been penetrated by 1,000lb bombs, which make a hole 25ft. deep. Many of these people were killed as they ran. ...

... next as many as 12 bombers appeared at a time dropping heavy and incendiary bombs upon the ruins. The rhythm of this bombing of an open town was, therefore, a logical one: first, hand grenades and heavy bombs to stampede the population, then machine-gunning to drive them below, next heavy and incendiary bombs to wreck the houses and burn them on top of their victims.

Steer went on:

At 2 am today when I visited the town the whole of it was a horrible sight, flaming from end to end. The reflection of the flames could be seen in the clouds of smoke above the mountains from 10 miles away. Throughout the night houses were falling until the streets became long heaps of red impenetrable debris.

The journalist added these details about the bombing:

Monday was the customary market day in Guernica for the country round. At 4.30 pm, when the market was full and peasants were still coming in, the church bell rang the alarm for approaching aeroplanes ...

Five minutes later a single German bomber appeared, circled over the town at a low altitude, and then dropped six heavy bombs, apparently aiming for the station. The bombs with a shower of grenades fell on a former institute and on houses and streets surrounding it. The aeroplane then went away. In another five minutes came a second bomber, which threw the same number of bombs into the middle of the town. About a quarter of an hour later three Junkers arrived to continue the work of demolition, and thenceforward the bombing grew in intensity and

Changing what needs to be changed, including the far more lethal character of the Israeli weapons of mass destruction, provided by the US and the other "democratic" powers, one might be describing the mass homicide in Gaza.

Guernica is one of those place names that carries a terrible historical resonance, along with others such as Lidice, Babi Yar, the Warsaw ghetto, My Lai, Sabra and Shatila, and, more recently, Fallujah and Mosul, a list to which the Gaza Strip must now be added.



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