

Battle of Brunete

On July 4th, 1937, the Republican forces were thrown into battle in a well planned but, ultimately, over-ambitious attack devised by the sophisticated Republican tactician, General Vincente Rojo. The offensive, launched 15 miles to the west of Madrid, was a diversionary attack designed to relieve the pressure on Santander in northern Spain, by breaking through the Nationalist lines at their weakest point. The Republican offensive was well-equipped, with 50,000 men, 136 pieces of artillery, 128 tanks and 150 aircraft.

Republican forces scored success by capturing Brunete and the nearby village of Villanueva de la Canada. However, weakened by fatigue, thirst and constant bombardment from the air, and slowed by the assault on the village of Villanueva (which had little strategic value), Republican forces were unable to progress to their main target, the Romanillos heights overlooking Madrid.

Despite the capture of 40 square miles of territory, the offensive achieved little real success. Particularly as, one week later, Nationalist forces were able to recapture Brunete. The failure of the offensive and the subsequent retreat, incurring the loss of valuable troops and armaments, was to become a recurring scenario for the Republic.