Civil War in Spain
German and Italian Forces Mail

Nazi Germany sent an elite military force called the Condor Legion to Spain, to aid Francisco Franco's Nationalist revolt. It consisted of 14,000 soldiers organized into fighter, bomber, aerial reconnaissance, armored, anti-aircraft, and espionage units. German terror bombings of civilians, including the heinous destruction of the Basque village Guernica, foretold the horrors of World War II that were yet to come. German involvement in Spain was kept secret until after the Nationalists had won, so mail from the Condor Legion is well camouflaged and difficult to detect. Fascist Italy sent an army of approximately 50,000 troops, known as the *Corpo Truppe Volontari*, a proud boast of the Mussolini government. A special postal service was established for the Italian soldiers in Spain, called *Posta Speciale 500*.

Mail for Condor Legion soldiers was sent to an undercover address in Berlin. After passing censorship, it was carried to Spain by diplomatic pouch. Wilhelm von Thoma, the addressee of the March 24, 1937, cover, was the German commander of all Condor Legion ground forces. "Imker/Drohne" were code words denoting the location of an anti-aircraft battery. An Italian forces field post card was mailed August 28, 1938, from Posta Speciale 500 to Italy. The sender, Giovanni La Mantia, was a captain in the Eighth Artillery Group of the Italian Army.