



The Day Guernica was Bombed: A Story Told by Witnesses and Survivors

By William L Smallwood

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Twenty-one percent of the bombers and fighters of Franco's air force in the whole Iberian peninsula took part in the attack on Gernika. As a result of this fabulous display of power, 85.22 percent of the buildings in town were completely destroyed during the bombing of Gernika on Monday, April 26, 1937. It was market day and, as reported by the Basque Government, 1,654 deaths were recorded between April and June 1937, as a consequence of the attack. The authorities of the Francoist regime tried to erase all evidence of the bombing and made no effort to recover the bodies of the victims and to register the deaths. This book is the result of a person who started learning Basque in the sheep camps of Idaho in order to research the story of the Gernika bombing. In Mountain Home (Idaho) William Smallwood was baptized ?Basilio Egurtxiki? by Dr. John Bideganeta, a second-generation Basque and a distinguished citizen of the town. ?Egurtxiki? is the literal translation into Basque of Smallwood and the Basilio came from the man who was more of a father than any other man in his life, Basilio Yriondo, an ?amerikanua??a Basque sheepherder in the American West. In September of 1971 Egurtxiki came to Gernika to research his book on the bombing and, after earning the trust of the people, in the spring and summer of 1972 he managed to conduct seventy-four interviews with survivors of the bombing. The following fall and winter, primarily through the efforts of Maria Angeles Basabe, the number of interviews was increased to one hundred and twenty-four. They both risked much, for a person could be arrested and tortured for mentioning the bombing. All the interviews had to be conducted in absolute secrecy. Hitherto unknown, we are honored to publish the story, written in the words of the survivors, forty years later, and seventy-five years after the bombing.

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Lester Gibbons:

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Tiffany Zamora:

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