

# IN RE MEM BRAN CE



THE AREA KNOWN AS DURANGUESADO WAS ONE OF THE BISCAY REGIONS THAT SUFFERED MOST THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR STARTED BY GENERAL FRANCO ON JULY 18<sup>TH</sup>, 1936. THE POSITIONING OF ALAVA IN FAVOUR OF THE REVOLT AND THE OCCUPATION OF GIPUZKOA BETWEEN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER IN 1936 BY GENERAL MOLA SITUATED THE FRONT LINE OF WAR ALONG THE LIMITS OF THE DURANGUESADO.

OTXANDIO WAS THE FIRST TOWN TO BE BOMBED ON JULY 22<sup>ND</sup> 1936, CAUSING 57 DEATHS, MOST OF THEM CIVILIANS.

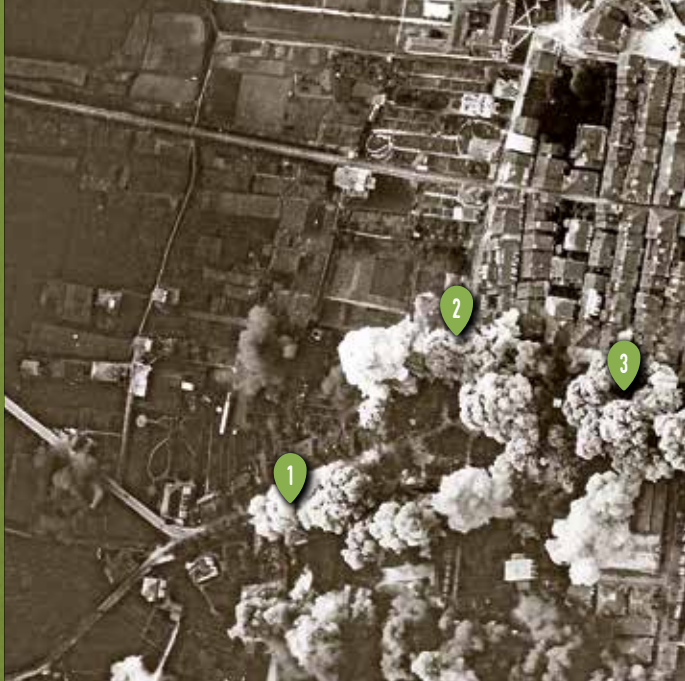
DURANGO ALSO SUFFERED THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR THAT YEAR. THE BOMBING ON SEPTEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup> CAUSED THE DEATH OF 12 PEOPLE.

BUT IT WAS THE FOLLOWING YEAR, ON MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup> 1937, WHEN THE TOWN SUFFERED THE BIGGEST BOMBING FOR WHICH IT IS REMEMBERED, THE REMAINS OF WHICH WE WILL ANALYSE ON THE TOUR THAT WE INVITE YOU TO READ ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES.

ELORRIO ALSO SUFFERED THE BOMBINGS. BESIDES THE BOMBING ON MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup>, ITS PROXIMITY TO THE FRONT LINE CAUSED THE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES OF WAR TO BE A CONSTANT THREAT TO ITS CITIZENS AND THE REFUGEES THAT WERE SHELTERING THERE.

THE OFFENSIVE STARTED ON THE FRONT OF BISCAY AND CAUSED SAD, WARLIKE EPISODES LIKE THE "SAIBIGAIN BATTLE" THE "INTXORTA BATTLE" OR THE TAKING OVER OF DURANGO ON APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup> 1937.

# RE MEM BRAN CE DURANGO





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# CON TEXT 1937

**O**n March 31<sup>st</sup> 1937, a Wednesday, General Mola started his offense attack with the objective of eliminating the northern front of the Biscay Campaign, which started in Otxandio and Ondarroa and ended in Asturias. It was the Navarre squadron (Carlists) who started the attack on the front near Otxandio. The taking over of Urkiola was among its objectives.

At seven o'clock, the five Italian bombers from Savoia 81 took off from Soria and their destination was Durango, starting the bombing attack at 8:30 a.m. The air alarm had just gone off, but the planes had already started the attack on the villa before people could react.

In just a few moments the airplanes dropped tons of explosives against the civilians.







The airplanes started the bombing from the end of Kurutziaga Street leading their way up towards Santa María. This trajectory allowed the pilots to maintain the sun against their backs so as to use the tower of the Basilica as a reference.

The first bombs fell in the intersection of this street and Músico Altuna Street, in front of the chapel that is today the "Kurutzesantu Museum". The shrapnel affected the buildings on both sides of the street and demolished the "Kurutziaga Cross".

REMAINS OF SHRAPNEL IN THE "AREITIO PALACE"

## KURU TZIAGA STREET





The bombs continued falling on Kurutziaga Street until they reached the church of San Jose Jesuits, where 27 people died when they were attending mass. The School was not damaged in spite of being the headquarters of the writer and journalist Kirikiño from the PNV (Nationalistic Basque Party) battalion squad.

On the other side of the street, a bomb exploded at the back of the convent of "Santa Susana", causing the death of 13 nuns and a worker. This location was used as the headquarters of a socialist battalion squad.

## THE SANTA SUSANA CONVENT FAÇADE

# CONVENTOS STREET





In Santa María Street, the Basilica area is one of the images that endures in time as a reminder of the bombing. The market was being held in the arch that day as the Market square was also being used as the garage of the battalion. Besides, mass was being held at the same hour of the bombing, that being the reason for the high number of victims.

At 17:45 the bombs fell down on Durango again against the most strategic elements, like the Durango railway station or the factories around it.

The bombings on that day left 336 dead, due to the machine-gun attacks and the 3.140 kilos of bombs which were dropped.

**SANTA MARIA . PLAQUE REMEMBERING  
THE VICTIMS OF THE BOMBING**

## SANTA MARIA STREET







The first bombing that Durango suffered was on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1936. The planes, coming from Vitoria, dropped four bombs on the villa. One of those fell on the Ezkurdi *fronton*, where a group of militia men and refugees who had escaped from Gipuzkoa were playing Basque pelota. The bomb caused the deaths of 12 people and many were wounded.

After the bombing, a group of angry militia men set off to the jail that was located in Ermodo. They took 22 detained prisoners who were sympathetic towards the Carlists and transferred them to the cemetery. All of them were executed without a previous trial being held.

### SHRAPNEL REMAINS AT THE EZKURDI FRONTON

## EZKURDI SQUARE





**D**uring the battle years, different buildings in Durango were occupied by the Republican army, such as the "San Francisco convent", the already mentioned Market Square or the "Etxezarreta Palace" amongst others. This last building was used as a hospital after the bombing on March 31<sup>st</sup> and was, amongst others, where the wounded militia men fighting at the front were taken.

Nowadays, it is home to the Art and History Museum of Durango, which preserves an exposition with different miniatures and contemporary elements from the war.

### MINIATURE MODEL OF A PLANE

## ETXEZA RRETA PALACE







**O**n April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1937, after the falling of Durango, it became a jail and home to the first company of battalion workers n°14, made up of prisoners that did clearing-up jobs of the affected sites. In January 1940 it was also a prison for women for a year where hundreds of political women prisoners were confined in sub-human conditions along with common criminals after the taking of Biscay by the fascist troops. Five women and five children died in this jail.

After the closing of the jail, they were transferred to other prisons like the "Amorebieta prison" and "Saturrarán prison", all of them located in convents, or to the "*Chalet de Orue*" in Bilbao.

ORIGINAL ENTRY TO THE JAIL

## NEVERS SCHOOL



# RE MEM BRAN CE

DURANGALDEA



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## ELORRIO

A militarized population where the Command leaders installed their headquarters in the "Jara palace". In addition to its military look, it had special political (visited by Lehendakari Jose Antonio Aguirre) and social value (a place of escape from Gipuzkoa). It was also bombed on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1937.

## BERRIZ

Personified by its mayor, Felipe Urtiaga, Berriz represents the Franquist repression, him being executed along with another two regional workers accused of "helping the rebellion".

## ZALDIBAR

This town is where the drama of the exiles is best defined, as those who ran from the war from Gipuzkoa were taken in at the old spa, the hotel and private houses, tripling the population of this town.

**ELORRIO, 1937. HOUSE OF THE GREAVES  
DESTROYED IN THE BOMBING.**

## SAIBIGAIN MOUNTAIN

The battle in Saibigain is remembered as the "Bloody mountain" because of the resistance the men endured to avoid Franco's troops from taking the Duranguesado (Durango area) and therefore, Biscay.

## MAÑARIA

The last battles took place in this town. Due to its strategic geoposition, this small town, of no more than 500 inhabitants today, resisted the attacks by Franco on its own for 24 hours.

## OTXANDIO

The first resistance attempts carried out in the Duranguesado was in Otxandio. the start of the war in the region and the first attack: the bombing of Otxandio on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1936.



"[...] THE HOLY FATHER WAS HIS LAST HOPE;  
THE HOLY FATHER, WHO THEY HAD ALWAYS  
VENERATED AND WHOSE GUARDIANSHIP THEY  
TRUSTED SAID NOTHING: THE HOLY FATHER DID  
NOT HAVE A WORD OF SOLACE FOR SO MANY  
DISTRESSED CHILDREN, NOT A REPROACH FOR  
SO MANY CRIMINAL [...]"

JOSE MIGUEL DE BARANDIARAN. PERSONAL DIARY. JUNE 26, 1937.





Durangaldeko Adiskideen



## TOURIST OFFICE OF DURANGO

Kurutziaga, 38  
48200 Durango-Bizkaia-Basque Country  
00 34 94 603 39 38  
[turismo@durango.eus](mailto:turismo@durango.eus)  
[www.turismodurango.net/en](http://www.turismodurango.net/en)

## PHOTOS

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