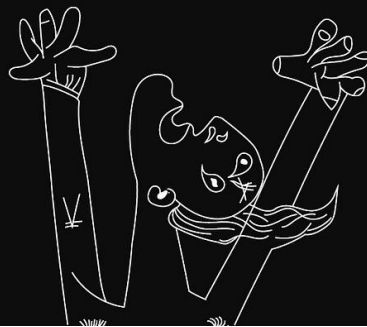


*We saw terrible things. We saw a family we knew hiding in the forest. The mother, two children and the grandmother. The planes flew circles around them for a while until terrified they fled and sought refuge in a ditch. The planes flew low and killed them all apart from one of the children who got up and staggered around, crying. Then, they killed him too.*

👋 **Welcome to Boletín #110**, an English-language newsletter covering historical, cultural and topical stories related to the A Level Spanish course. This week:

1. Edition 110 of Boletín (the three texts).
2. Tier 2/3 vocabulary, grammar search for students and A Level structures.
3. The bombing of Guernica (**what happened?**).
4. Joseba Elosegui (**set himself on fire in front of Franco!**)
5. Edition 93 throw back (Spanish Civil War edition).
6. Students, I'd greatly appreciate your feedback! ([Microsoft form](#)).
7. Next edition (**interview with best-selling author and journalist Giles Tremlett**)

Historic basque town wiped out;  
rebel fliers machine-gun civilians.



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### 📌 Edition 110.

I hope everyone is having/has had (depending on when you read this) a great half-term! I only release editions during term-time which should explain the delay since #109. This edition, #110, was made with some forethought as 26th April marks the anniversary of the bombing of Guernica.

The dreadful story above about a family's last moments in Guernica is a memory<sup>1</sup> from 12-year-old Imanol Aguirre. It was awful translating it and probably not too nice to read either so I must apologise. I nearly changed it altogether to an admission from a Condor Legion pilot, but it disgusted me so much that I knew I had to keep it. Why shy away from it? The admission from the German pilot is below if you're interested.

Picasso created more than 50,000 works of art but probably his most famous immortalises the tragedy of Guernica. The [masterpiece](#), which he refused to be housed in Spain whilst Franco ruled, currently resides in the Reina Sofía Art Museum. What an experience it is to stand before it.

The title of text one this week is *La muerte de Guernica* which I like because as well as meaning death, in some contexts *muerte* can be used as *fate*.

As you may know, I like posting additional links on these newsletters for anybody to use as a springboard to read further so allow me to segway to the brilliant [graphic novel](#) by the same name, *La muerte de Guernica*. It's well worth a read and is adapted from a Paul Preston book who I'm sure you'll agree needs no introduction.

Another of the texts this week will be of interest to those studying *El otro árbol de Guernica* as it is about the exile of Basque children to Southampton after the bombardment of Guernica. A great place to start for those interested in learning more is the Basque children [website](#) which is a repository of information.

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### Tier 2/3 vocabulary.

- Realizar (vb) - *to carry out or undertake (a task)*.
- Cotidiano (adj) - *daily, everyday*.
- El zumbido (nms) - *the buzzing, whirring or humming*.
- El vientre (nms) - *the belly*.
- Encargar (vb) - *to commission (best translation), to put in charge of*.
- La corriente de pensamiento - *school of thought*.
- El lienzo (nms) - *the canvas*.
- Emprender (vb) - *to set out on, launch or undertake (again, yes I know)*.
- Zarpar (vb) - *to set sail*.

### Grammar to look out for.

1. The preterite tense.
2. The present tense.
3. The imperfect tense.
4. The past perfect (había + past participle).
5. An example of "leísmo" (using the indirect object pronoun "le" instead of the direct object pronoun "lo" is known as *leísmo*. This is extremely common.
6. Definite articles.
7. Superlatives.

### A Level structures.

- *Insistir en que* + *subjunctive/indicative*. A tricky verb/preposition which features on the WJEC specification as a structure to be aware of. *Insistir en que* is followed by the indicative (not subjunctive) when referring to certainty however the subjunctive is used when it is followed by requests, orders or suggestions.

### Example:

1. *Bernarda insiste en que sus hijas lleven ropa negra (subjunctive used to show Bernarda is ordering that her daughters do something/change their behaviour).*
  2. *Insisten en que Guernica se trata de una autobiografía (indicative used to show certainty in the belief by some that Guernica is autobiographical).*
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### La muerte de Guernica

Guernica is a beautiful town in the Basque Country of Spain and is most well-known for three things. The 1937 bombing in which it was all but destroyed, the Picasso painting by the same name and the tree of Guernica.

The tree, an oak, symbolises the laws and freedoms of Basque people and in its shade many civil ceremonies have taken place from debates and parliaments to monarchs swearing oaths (Ferdinand and Isabela in 1476<sup>5</sup>) to respect Basque freedoms and laws. The latter going back centuries. Those studying *El otro árbol de Guernica* will recognise references to the tree when Santi, a Basque evacuee in Belgium, meets with his group of Basque friends around a tree in the patio of *Fleury* to talk and make decisions. Their group identity as Spaniards and Basques is reinforced and they seem to find comfort beside the tree.

*Se reunían en torno al roble y empezaban a cantar canciones y más canciones vizcaínas. Santi pensaba que aquello era un poco como estar en casa.*

The tree's saplings are said to be planted by Basque people living outside of the Basque country so they can remember who they are and where they come from<sup>6</sup>. So significant is this tree as a symbol of Basque freedom and pride that a wrap-around armed guard (with grenades) was formed to protect it from axe-wielding Falangists who, upon Franco's forces taking the town, wanted to chop it down.

The war in the north of Spain was raging in 1937. The name Guernica was soon to be written in the history books.

*Today we were in Guernica. It is completely destroyed and not, as the newspapers here say, by hordes of red incendiaries, but by German and Italian bombing. We all think it is a scandalous and foul deed to destroy a militarily irrelevant town like Guernica. (Condor Legion pilot Harro Harder)*

Guernica, it was claimed, was an important rail and roadway junction with an arms factory. Army reservists were stationed there, and enemy troops were retreating through the town en masse across the Renteria bridge. This bridge was to become a key military objective but conversely also one of the safest places in town during the very operation hatched to destroy it.

*Blitzkrieg is a term used to describe a method of offensive warfare designed to strike a swift, focused blow at an enemy using mobile, manoeuvrable forces, including armoured tanks and*

air support. Such an attack ideally leads to a quick victory, limiting the loss of soldiers and artillery.<sup>7</sup>

The date is 26th April 1937. As a harbinger to the blitzkrieg strategy used throughout World War 2 to crush morale and raze cities to the ground Hitler's Condor Legion and Mussolini's Aviazione Legionaria all but destroy Guernica. An estimated 70% of the town is pulverized. They are acting on orders from Francisco Franco. The Renteria bridge remains intact.

Astonishingly, the Francoist press claim that retreating *reds* (communists) set fire to the town. This much they even publish in the nationalist newspaper coming out of their propaganda headquarters from Burgos. We can only imagine the nationalists were so aghast at the consequences of their own evil plan come to fruition that they tried to absolve themselves of all responsibility and distances themselves from the act. The eyes of the world and all the press are now suddenly on Spain and Guernica. A political nightmare for Franco.



"We want to say loudly and clearly some words about the fire of Guernica. Guernica is destroyed by a petrol fire. Those that have burned it to the ground are communist hoards led criminally by the President of the Basque Country, Aguirre. The fire took place yesterday and Aguirre has lied attributing it to the Nationalist Air Force."

Michael Alpert, in his book [Franco and the Condor Legion](#), details the munitions dropped on Guernica. I've summarised it below in chronological order. Keep in mind that Guernica had zero aerial defence systems and the attack took place on a busy market day.

1. 12 x 50kg bombs hit a hotel, the railway station and the plaza. The bridge is missed.
  2. 36 x 50kg bombs destroy several buildings and miss the bridge.
  3. High-explosive shrapnel and incendiary carpet bombs dropped over a one-kilometre-long line. This hits the market, shops and factories.
  4. Machine gun strafing of those fleeing.
  5. 31 tons of high explosive with 50kg/250kg payloads destroying houses and water supply lines.
  6. 2,5000 incendiary bombs.
  7. More machine-gunning of people fleeing.
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## Joseba Elozegi

I cannot publish this newsletter without mentioning Joseba Elozegi.

Here's what you need to know, taken from [this](#) news report.

Joseba Elozegi was said to be a brave and intelligent man, known for being friendly and jovial. He was 55 years old in 1970 and had three children. As a young man, he fought in the Spanish Civil War and reached the rank of Captain. During the war, he witnessed first-hand the bombing of Guernica. After the nationalists captured Barcelona, he went into exile in France.

During World War II, he joined a resistance group that helped allied pilots escape from the Nazis. He was sent to prison for this, but upon his release, he re-joined a clandestine resistance group and aided both French and Basque resistance efforts.

On September 18th, 1970, during the opening ceremony of the pelota world championships in San Sebastián, Joseba set himself alight and threw himself off a balcony. He shouted "*Gora Euzkadi Azkatuta*" which means "*Free the Basque country*". He landed not far from Franco himself but Franco remained cold and unaffected. Despite being severely burned, Joseba survived.

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## **Edition 93 throw back**

For a more general recap of the **Spanish Civil War**, if you haven't already, then check out **edition 93!**



## Next edition

👉 If you enjoyed this edition, please subscribe, and share it with your students or department to help it keep growing! Next week I will be interviewing Giles Tremlett which I'm very excited about and can't wait to share.

Ollie

1

<https://www.infobae.com/sociedad/2022/04/26/a-85-anos-del-bombardeo-de-guernica-el-crimen-que-mostro-al-mundo-el-horror-de-la-guerra-civil-espanola/>

2

[El bombardeo de Guernica.](#)

3

[Pablo Picasso and Guernica.](#)

4

<https://www.muyinteresante.es/historia/32732.html>

5

Ghosts of Spain by Giles Tremlett (location 4778)

6

<https://aboutbasquecountry.eus/en/2021/05/04/the-tree-of-guernica-the-basque-seed-that-flourished-throughout-uruguay-article-and-video/>

7

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/blitzkrieg>