

BOMBS OVER GIRONA

Passive defence elements during the Civil War: barricades, trenches and air-raid shelters

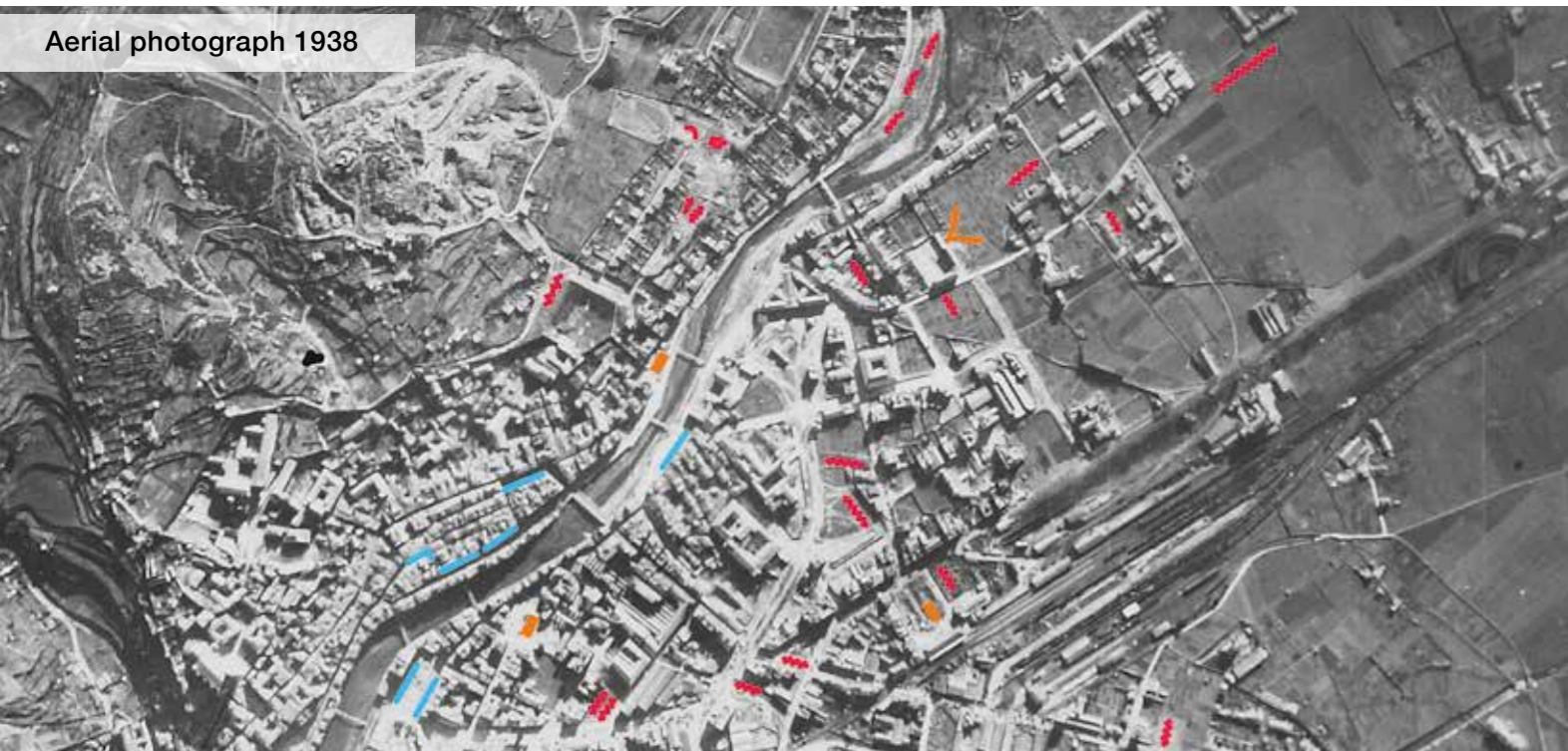
Types of passive defence elements in Girona



1. Barricade under the arches. Drawing: Núria Vancells
2. Improvised shelter in a private house. Drawing: Manel Baulida.
3. Diagram of a collective cellular air-raid shelter. Drawing: Núria Vancells.
4. Sketch of a trench. Drawing: Manel Baulida.

Barricades, trenches and air-raid shelters built in Girona

Aerial photograph 1938



Situation of passive defence elements built during the Civil War
 ■ Shelters ■ Trenches ■ Barriers

▲ Source: Ufficio Storico dell'Aeronautica Militare di Roma.
 ▼ Source: Ajuntament de Girona - UMAT.

Current aerial photograph



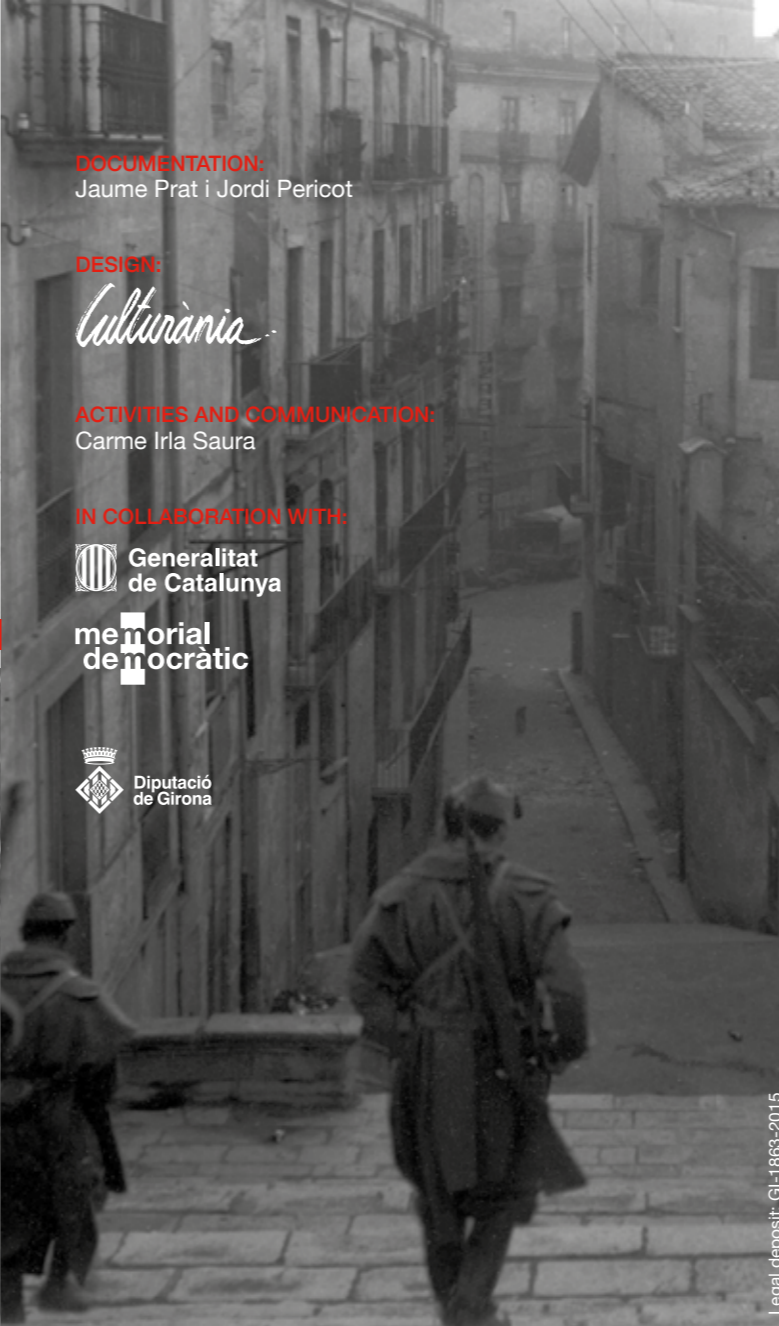
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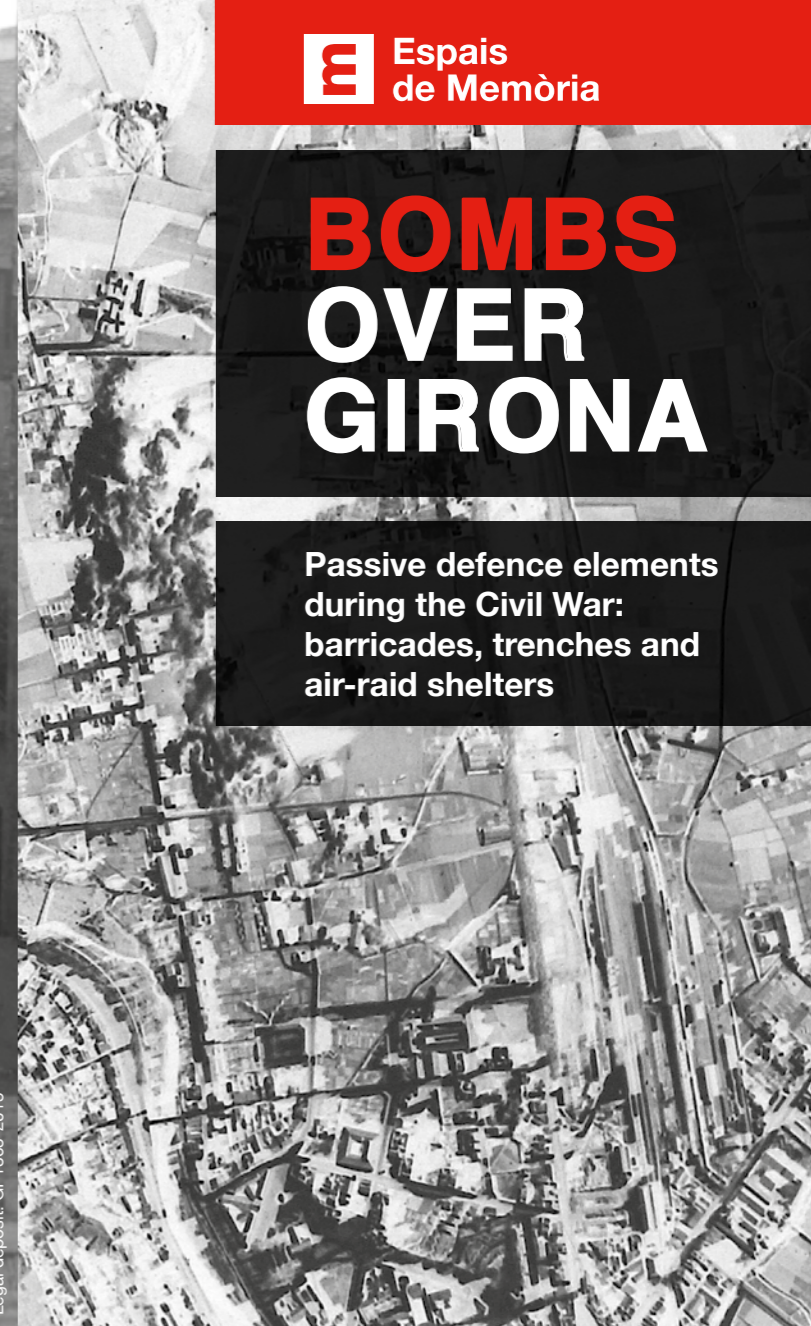
ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNICATION:
Carme Irla Saura

IN COLLABORATION WITH:
 Generalitat de Catalunya
 memorial democràtic

Diputació de Girona



▲ National soldiers walking down the steps of Sant Martí Sacosta. Photography: Albert-Louis Deschamps, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica.



▲ The air raids of 20 April 1938 over the southern part of Girona. Photography: Ufficio Storico dell'Aeronautica Militare, Roma. Facilitated by the Diari de Girona.



Virtual visit around the rooms in the shelter



More information and activities at: MHG

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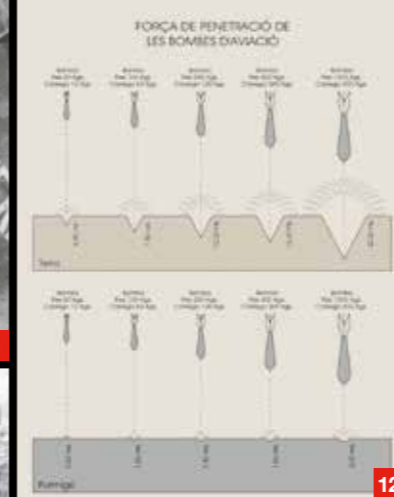
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"...You heard the whistle of the bombs and you knew they were falling but you didn't know where. We went and sheltered behind some boards leaning up against the supporting wall of the house, and we heard somebody outside shouting: 'This one's falling in the middle of the street!'. But it didn't, it fell on our house. The whole house just collapsed, except the wall where we had taken shelter."

Reminiscences of Enriqueta Baulida i Soler
 The house was No. 64, Rutlla Street



MUSEU D'HISTÒRIA DE GIRONA



1. Savoia-Marchetti SM79 on the coast of Tarragona. Source: http://www.finn.it/regia/html/guerra_civile_spagnola.htm
2. Air raid on Carme street district, 1939. Source: Diari de Girona. Facilitated by: Ufficio Storico dell'Aeronautica Militare de Roma.
3. Franco's cruiser Canarias, from which the first (naval) bomb attack was launched against Girona province. Source: <http://funkoffizier.wordpress.com/2007/03/28/crucero-c-21-canarias/>
4. General Camilo Alonso Vega, marching victoriously through the current rambla de la Libertat leading Franco's troops. Photography: *Semanario Gráfico Nacional-sindicalista*, no. 103.



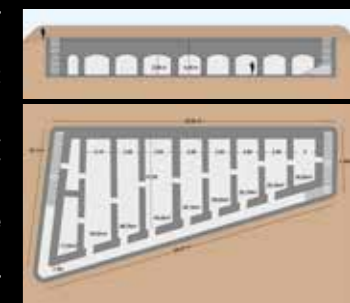
▲ Jardí de la Infància at the end of the 20s of the 20 th century with a slightly oval shape. Photography: Ajuntament de Girona. CRDI (Fototipia Thomas, ed.).



5. Civil War damage at Grober factory. Photography: *Semanario Gráfico Nacional-sindicalista*, no. 103.
6. House nos. 64, 66 and 68 Rutlla Street, totally destroyed by the shelling of 29 January 1939. In 1944 they were completely demolished to open the new Sant Joan Baptista de la Salle street. Photography: Ajuntament de Girona. CRDI (Josep Trull Cufí)
7. Girona occupied by Franco's National troops. 4 February 1939. Photography: *Semanario Gráfico Nacional-sindicalista*, no. 103.
8. Effects of the war, Nou Street of Girona. Photography: *Semanario Gráfico Nacional-sindicalista*, no. 103.
9. Building a collective air-raid shelter. Source: Personal archives of Alicia Bou.
10. Stamps on meals and drinks served in hotels, boarding houses, restaurants, bars and cafés to collect money for building air-raid shelters.
11. Children giving the fascist salute. Source: EFE Agency.
12. Diagram of the impact of the bombs.
13. L'Autonomista, 21 January 1937.
14. The War as Seen by Children, entry submitted by the pupils of Carles Marx Primary School, 1937. Photography: MHG, Jordi S. Carrera. Source: EFE Agency.

Jardí de la Infància shelter

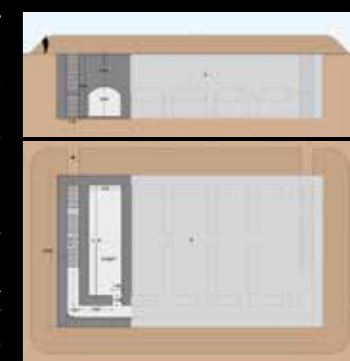
A new oval-shaped cellular shelter was designed by municipal architect Ricard Giralt Casadesús and built in 1938, with a total underground area of 584.67 m² that was nearly as big as the gardens above it. The 357.86 m² of useable space (including corridor and steps) could provide protection for over 600 persons. For additional safety in the event of a direct bomb impact, the entire outside surface area was covered with a pyramid-shaped earth mound of about 2 metres high.



11. Children giving the fascist salute. Source: EFE Agency.
12. Diagram of the impact of the bombs.
13. L'Autonomista, 21 January 1937.
14. The War as Seen by Children, entry submitted by the pupils of Carles Marx Primary School, 1937. Photography: MHG, Jordi S. Carrera. Source: EFE Agency.

Les Bernardes shelter

This rectangular, cellular shelter was the largest in Girona. Also designed by Ricard Giralt Casadesús, it was built in 1938 on the land remaining after the 1936 demolition of Les Bernardes church and monastery, located between Les Hortes and Santa Clara streets. It was similar in design to the Jardí de la Infància shelter and could supposedly hold up to 750 people. Today the shelter is buried under its own earth mound, with which it was sealed off by Franco's National troops in 1939.



The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)

On 17 July 1936, against a background of serious social unrest and notable political radicalization, the military stationed in Morocco revolted against the legitimate Second Republic government. On the following day, 18 July, speaking on the radio from Tenerife, General Francisco Franco proclaimed a state of war, thereby spreading the rebellion to many other sectors of the army on the Spanish mainland. The military insurgents envisaged a coup d'état lasting for three or four days, but the revolt only met with partial success on the mainland. This triggered off the Spanish Civil War and all the following tragic events which ensued. The war ended on 1 April 1939, and during those three years violence raged both on the battlefield and in the defenceless non-combat zones.

Why the shelters were built

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) marked a watershed in modern military history by introducing a new and terrible form of warfare, i.e. systematic air raids on civilian centres in non-combat zones, later known as **total warfare**.

In response, a specific type of war architecture was planned for villages and towns throughout the noncombat zones: **air-raid shelters**. It is calculated that over 2000 shelters were built all over Catalonia (of which 1400 were in Barcelona). Girona was no exception, with four new shelters built in the city. Despite these precautions, the air raids caused widespread slaughter among the civilian population, with over 5000 fatalities in Catalonia alone.

The air raids

The city was bombed by the fascist air force stationed in Mallorca, which had fallen into the hands of the insurgents at the start of the Civil War. The raids were carried out on 20 April 1938, and again on 27, 28 and 29 January and 1 February 1939. The air force consisted of Italian Savoia-Marchetti SM79 Sparviero planes from the Aviazione Legionaria, and German Heinkel He 111 planes from the Condor Legion.

The sad toll resulting from the indiscriminate attacks was 58 dead and over one hundred injured. About 120 buildings suffered bomb and shrapnel damage.

Types of passive defence elements in Girona

Girona's passive defence was shaping up over the three years of the war with the construction of barricades, trenches and collective air-raid shelters, in addition to the improvised shelters in many private houses. The city's passive defence elements could, in theory, hold approximately 6500 people.

Girona Passive Defence Board

From December 1936, the Municipal Department of Defence and the provisional Passive Defence Board under its supervision published several edicts containing instructions and regulations informing the population how to proceed in the event of an air raid. Girona Passive Defence Board was made official in November 1937, and immediately set about designing collective air-raid shelters which were built and fitted out from the first months of 1938 onwards. For this purpose, the Board was granted 500,000 pesetas (€ 3000) from the Government of Catalonia through the Catalan Passive Defence Board, and an exceptional budget of 750,000 pesetas (€ 4500) which the City Council intended raising through special levies (fixed taxes on industries, wage taxes, and a stamp tax on drinks).

Plaça del Carril shelter

This cellular air-raid shelter, situated under the playground of today's Plaça del Poeta Marquina, is a small, sturdy construction of 263.06 m² designed by Girona architect Josep Claret Rovira and built in the second half of 1938. The shape is rectangular with a "labyrinthine" interior without a corridor, and the protective earth mound on top was further covered with numerous sections of railway tracks. The 15.09 m² of usable space could hold over 250 people. The shelter has never been opened to the public, despite its relatively good state of conservation.

