

CONTEMPORARY ERA

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1. A TUMULTUOUS POLITICAL PERIOD

During the first decades of the 19th century, the effects of the Peninsular War (1808-1814) had a profound influence on the demographics of Girona. The city lost half of its inhabitants and the pre-war population levels were not recovered until the decade of the 1830s. However, this upward trend was short-lived. The second half of the 19th century was marked by a demographic stagnation. From 1900, a slight population growth began again. The main reason was the city's ability to attract a migratory flow mainly from the rural population. After the siege of 1809, a period of Napoleonic domination over the city began, which lasted until the middle of 1814. The new authorities initiated some reforms in the areas of health, planning and the postal system.

2. INDUSTRIALISATION

Modern industrial growth in the city was driven by maximum optimisation of water from the Monar irrigation canals, the confiscation of Mendizábal which freed the land in the Mercadal area, and the sale of municipal land assets. Industrial growth hinged on three sectors: the paper industry, the textile industry and the machine construction industry. The 19th century industrialisation gained importance and spread to the neighbouring towns of Santa Eugènia and Salt. Companies were an average size and they were limited by the physical framework and social context, but some managed to become important in the history of Catalan and Spanish production. This is the case of the following companies: the paper mill *La Gerundense*, the foundry and turbine factory *Planas i Flaquer*, and *Grober*, the belts, buttons and laces factory.

As in many other places, conditions for factory workers in Girona were tough and difficult. As we get further into the 20th century, the workers' movement gained momentum and connected with initiatives emerging in Barcelona. In this environment, it is necessary to emphasize the presence of women. The workforce of the textile factories was mostly female (more than 70%), which means that the first large industrial production in Girona, as in many other parts of the western world, was produced by women.

3. THE TRAIN AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

The train facilitated the movement of people and merchandise. Its arrival in Girona was significantly delayed and the city did not have a connection with the capital of the Principality and Madrid until 1862. Sixteen more years passed until a train connection with France was established. The energy in the cities surrounding the region of Girona enabled various narrow train lines to be built, one of which ended in the city of Girona. This event strengthened the city's status as capital.

Between 1883 and 1886 the city's local electric network was designed and built. Girona became the first city in the State with hydroelectric powered street lighting. On the other hand, at the turn of the 20th century, carts, traps and stagecoaches moved using animal traction were gradually substituted by motor vehicles.

The photography business became significantly more widespread, as did the cinema when the first film theatres were created. During the twenties and thirties of the last century, radio began to supplement the press as a social communication method.

4. CULTURE AND ART

At the end of the 19th century, Working classes socialised in taverns, the street and squares, at Sunday picnics at the Sant Daniel valley springs, neighbourhood parties and carnival. Areas for washing clothes, be it rooftop washing places or the river, were places where housewives could socialise.

The city's wealthy class had various spaces for cultural socialisation: places for political debate, reading, leisure and social relations. Among those for leisure, the Devesa Gardens, the Municipal Theatre, the Casino *Gerundense* and some cafés such as *Cafè Vila* in the Vi square.

With respect to the world of erudition and literature, the Literary Association (1872- 1901) must be underlined, as it published the magazine *Revista de Gerona* (1876-1896) whose members used a clear diglossia: Spanish for history and scientific articles and Catalan for poetry. It was the new Modernist (more iconoclastic) generation represented by Prudenci Bertrana and Miquel de Palol who fully adopted Catalan as a modern language of culture.

Between 1913 and 1917, the Athenea society was particularly significant as it was in a building especially designed by the architect Rafael Masó, who, in addition, was the society's main promoter. This building held art exhibitions, conferences and concerts that followed the *noucentisme* movement cultural norms. Rafael Masó was the soul of the high culture of Girona at the time.

In the artistic field, there are also the extraordinary personalities of Fidel Aguilar and Ricard Guinó, both sculptors of great quality and interesting trajectory. The first died very young, but left an important legacy, mostly ceded to this Museum by his descendants. These are works of great perfection and artistic and conceptual delicacy. The second was a collaborator of Renoir, and in his workshop in Paris he made some of the pieces that can be seen in this room.

In this environment, the Polish painter Mela Mutermilch (Warsaw 1876-Paris 1967) deserves special mention. Formed in the Parisian academy Covarossi, she obtained the gold medal in the Exposition Universelle of Paris of 1937 and exhibited in Pittsburgh, Venice, New York, London, Varsovi. His works are in international museums like Alghero, Barcelona, Girona, Lyon, and other French cities.

She was closely linked to Girona, where she first arrived in March 1914. She settled in the old town where she lived with the painter Pere Farró. Acquired great popularity in artistic environments and around them were a group of artists such as Xavier Montsalvatge, Manolo Hugué or Celso lagar, with Nonart coffee, located on the Rambla, as a point of reference for their gatherings.

He cultivated a painting of very lively colours, based on the drawing. It captured in a special way the Valley of Sant Daniel and the corners of the old city, as evidenced by the beautiful picture that can be seen in this room.

5. THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The Second Republic (1931) was marked by the definitive demolition of the walls, in addition to other measures of hygiene, the educational impulse and the regularization of finances. In the summer of 1936 the republican democratic system received an irreversible blow. Between 17 and 19 July, a significant part of the Spanish army, supported by the Catholic Church, and conservative political forces, rose violently against constitutional order. Immediately, the progressive political and union organizations offered a strong resistance that, in many areas of the state, represented the momentary defeat of the armed uprisings. The relative failure of the fascist insurrection implied the beginning of a civil strife. In Catalonia, where the left had remarked the reaction, a deep revolutionary process began. However, in the republican rearguard the constant litigation between reform and revolution gave way to the emergencies generated by an unequal war, which, despite the efforts, had a favorable outcome for the block called "national". On 10 February 1939, Catalonia was subject to the fascist yoke and on April 1, oppression extended to the rest of the state.

In the Girona region the human cost of the civil war was very high. Taking into account the totality of counties, the number of identifiable victims is around 7000. To the approximately 4500 dead on the war front, it is necessary to add 2500 due to the Republican and Francoist repression, the bombings and the penalties suffered in centers of Internment and concentration camps.

In addition, to these figures must be added an unknown but certainly very relevant number of victims caused by malnutrition, the reappearance of epidemic diseases and the psychological sequel derived from tension, fear and terror. Nevertheless, a dreadful scenario is drawn, since the majority of dead people were part of a strip that oscillated between the 18 and the 30 years.

6. THE FRANCHISING DICTATORSHIP

The establishment of the New Francoist State, after the Republican defeat in the Civil War, brought an unprecedented historical fracture. In the city of Girona, as in the rest of the Spanish state, the first two decades of dictatorship were characterized by the submissiveness of a large part of the population to a situation dominated by fear, repression, and economic difficulties. The daily struggle for survival became the main identifying aspect of a society governed by a political system with totalitarian voluntariness and a deeply Spanish vocation. Just as in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, Francoism abolished any sign of democratic freedom. Only the changes in the international context, which occurred after the end of World War II, apparently softened the hardness of the regime.

7. A NEW URBAN LANDSCAPE (GIRONA 1960-1975):

During the sixties and seventies, several public works were carried out that transformed the urban landscape of Girona. Some of the most emblematic were the buildings popularly known as "mushrooms" of the so-called Plan Perpinyà. Initially, the plan was to build six sixteen-story skyscrapers next to two large buildings with shops and offices, and if carried out in full, would have greatly changed the personality of traditional Girona. Thanks to strong public opposition, and after a few bureaucratic and normative obstacles, the plan was only partially realized.

In order to justify the new urban situation resulting from the execution of the partial plans, as well as the "fait accompli" policy followed by many constructors and individuals, on March 29, 1971 the municipal corporation approved the General Plan of Urban Planning.

8. THE WAY TO DEMOCRACY (1975-1979):

After Franco's death in 1975, the dynamics of the political process favored the parties, in the face of general elections, to enter into competition and to leave aside the initial joint mobilization strategy carried out by the Democratic Assembly. Undoubtedly, those moments of inflection in the transition process made it possible to externalize publicly the projects of each political formation. In the course of the various electoral announcements, majority support for anti-Franco political formations was confirmed. The first democratic city council of Girona, after 40 years of Franco's rule, was constituted in April 1979.