

Esteban i Cano, Manuel. *Atles de la Guerra Civil a Barcelona*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009.

DONNA SOUTHARD

The *Atles de la Guerra Civil a Barcelona* is a large reference work in Catalan offering a novel historiographic perspective on the Spanish Civil War. Longtime graphic designer Manuel Esteban conceived of this project, driven by his passion for the history of the Second Spanish Republic, which also led him to study with the late military historian Gabriel Cardona at the University of Barcelona. Esteban fuses his passion for history with his professional experience in this work, which maps the Civil War in Barcelona's urban landscape through the activities of the Second Republic's institutions. With Madrid and Bilbao under siege by Spanish Nationalist and allied troops led by Spain's future dictator, General Francisco Franco, the Central and Basque Governments transferred their offices to the Barcelona, which was the seat of Catalonia's regional government, known as the *Generalitat*. Here the nation's three democratically elected governments worked together to manage a huge influx of refugees, administer the areas of the nation still under Republican control and conduct the war. During this time, Barcelona became the site of a unique social experiment, famously depicted in George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), in which an anarchist-inspired workers' revolution was consummated. While the English author's classic testimonial is imbued with wartime immediacy told from the perspective of an outsider, the *Atles* is suffused with the insider's brooding desire to make sense of what happened in the streets his city, among his own people a generation later.

After ten years of intense research entailing the reconstruction the last official maps made under the Second Republic in 1935, Esteban was able to precisely reproduce the urban layout, district by district, and situate the most significant institutions and events of the war. The resulting one hundred and eight maps, carefully rendered to facilitate their legibility and study, are accompanied by thirty-two interpretative texts, written by renowned scholars, including Paul Preston, Angel Viñas, Manel Risques, Pelai Pagès, Mary Nash,

Hilari Ragner, José A. Ferrer Benimeli and Judit Pujado, and coordinated by Cardona, who also contributes the prologue and first two narratives.

Texts and maps are organized thematically in seven chapters. The first chapter gives an account of the failed military uprising in Barcelona of July 19, 1936, which was meant to support the main thrust of Franco's rebellion, and the revolutionary initiatives that emerged in response. Chapter two provides an overview of the military organization in the city, while chapter three examines the events of May 1937, with particular emphasis on the role of women. Some historians consider this armed conflict between different factions of the left (Anarchists, Trotskyists, Republicans and the *Generalitat*), to be a civil war within a civil war. Chapter four examines Barcelona as the seat of the nation's three governments, while the following chapter offers an account of life in a city under attack, surveying such aspects as food supply, health, transportation, banking, entertainment and associations, including sports clubs, co-ops and the Freemasons. Chapter six focuses on Barcelona's cultural institutions and the role of the press in reporting on the war, while the final chapter is devoted to solidarity – the domestic and international organizations that facilitated the evacuation of children and provided assistance to refugees. An epilogue details the fall of Barcelona and the repressive measures taken by Franco against the city that was the last refuge of the Republic.

Each chapter is introduced in a visually spectacular manner. A historical black and white photograph occupies a page and a half of the atlas's enormous visual field, while a matte black strip on the left serves as background for the white text of a brief summary. The imposing red letters of each chapter title extend in two lines across the top of the black strip and the double-page image, drawing attention to the upper left-hand corner of the visual field – the place of privilege for the initiation of reading. The strong impact of the photo evenly divides the attention of the reader-spectator between the graphic and lexical texts, establishing a balance between these two textual "others." At the same time, the red, black and white color scheme is a clear reference to the anarchist flag and the widespread "anarchist sentiment that developed during the late eighteenth hundreds and early twentieth century as an ethical and poetic response" ["sentimiento anarquizante de finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX...", que surge como respuesta ética y poética"] to the desire for emancipation of the oppressed popular classes (Esteban, "E-mail"). Besides these enticing chapter introductions, almost all the cartographic pages are visually enhanced with either

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black and white photos or posters of the era to aid comprehension and “expand its potential readership” [“se ha creído oportuno ampliar el público potencialmente interesado”], aesthetically signaling access to reading and print culture, a programmatic focus of the anarchist sentiment permeating the left during the Second Republic (Esteban, “Memoria”).

This editorial project is framed by the current concern in Spain with the recuperation of historical memory. In his prologue, Cardona affirms that remembering would not be complete without a recognition of the physical environment of the city as the urban scene of this radical social experiment: “the record of the stones, buildings, streets and plazas, where our ancestors, perhaps without intending to do so, made history” [“el record de las pedres, els edificis, els carrers i les places on els nostres avantpassats, potser sense pretendre-ho, van fer historia”] (9). This reflection also contains the key to two questions that arise upon contemplating the physical dimensions of the work. In this age of economic crisis and Internet publications, why undertake a publication of this size and expense? If the *Atles* seeks to expand its potential readership, why write it in Catalan? Cardona’s reference to “our ancestors” and the elegiac sensibility that imbues the work provide possible answers to these queries. The *Atles de la Guerra Civil a Barcelona* may be seen as a monument of sorts, a secular analog to the Valley of the Fallen, constructed not stone by stone at the expense of moribund prisoners of war, but rather map by map, text by text and photo by photo. Esteban and Cardona carry out this collective project in a very personal way to honor the fallen with a paper monument that materializes the vision of a more just society through the careful work of remembering, examining and reconstructing the historical record of the city.

WORKS CITED

- Cardona, Gabriel. “Prologue.” *Atles de la Guerra Civil a Barcelona*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 2009. Print.
- Esteban i Cano, Manuel. “Memoria del proyecto.” Barcelona, no date. Unpublished document.
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