

WORLD CRISIS FROM BELOW

The after-use of the fearsome heritage at the former Soviet Missile Site at Santa Cruz de los Pinos, Cuba.

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Background

The project has its background in an earlier archaeological research project (2004-2008) focusing upon the materiality and the memories connected to former Soviet missile sites in Cuba. This project was a joint venture between the Department of Historical Studies, Gothenburg, Department of Archaeology, Södertörn, and the Departments of History and Anthropology, Havana, Cuba. The project has been reported both in articles and in a project report (Burström et. al 2006; Burström & Karlsson 2008; Burström et. al. 2009).

The planned project uses the results from this project but approach them from a new direction since it takes its point of departure in how the fearsome cultural heritage remains at, and the landscape surrounding, one of the former missile sites – Santa Cruz de los Pinos – are after-used by the official heritage management, as well as by the local communities, and how this site can be recognized as a cultural heritage of national as well as international importance. This at the same time as the planned project also aims to establish exchange of students and teaching staff between the partners.

In October 1962 the world was standing at the brink of a nuclear holocaust (the Missile Crisis). The background to the crisis was to be found in the reactions by the US government when it learned that Soviet medium-range missiles with nuclear capacity were installed at a number of locations in Cuba. The crisis was solved within the framework of a diplomatic agreement between the USA and the Soviet Union and the missiles were dismantled and removed from Cuba during November 1962. The crisis has been severely researched on its meta-level by historians concerning its role in world-politics during the Cold War. This research has often had its point of departure in military strategic reasonings and approaches (cf. Garthoff 1987; Blight & Welch eds. 1989; Blight 1990; Blight, Lewis & Welch eds. 1991; Allyn et. al. eds. 1992; Blight, Allyn & Welch eds. 1993; Fursuenko & Naftali 1997; May & Zelikow eds. 1997; White 1997; Diez Acosta 1992, 1997, 2002a-b). The fearsome heritage of the missiles sites – that once stood in the centre of the world's attention – their material remains, and the multivocal memories existing in the local community surrounding them have with the exception of a general survey carried out by Cuban historians and military in 1991, and the project mentioned above, been neglected and repressed by the meta-narrative of the Missile Crisis (Diez Acosta ms; Burström et. al 2006; Burström & Karlsson 2008; Burström et. al. 2009). Today material remains from the missile installations can still be found at these sites and in the surrounding landscape and these items are after-used in various ways by the local communities surrounding the sites. This at the same time as the official heritage management slowly shows an increasing interest in an after-use of the sites in local museums and in the industry of cultural tourism. Thus, the fact that the after-use of the missile sites and their landscape takes on different forms, expressed in various ways by different actors, are one of the focal points of the project.

Aims and objectives

- Promote bilateral and multidisciplinary cooperation with Cuban and Swedish scholars (anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians).
- To establish exchange of students and teaching staff between the partners.
- Function as a platform for discussions concerning the different forms of after-use of the former Soviet missile site at Santa Cruz de los Pinos, Cuba, and its landscape as expressed in different ways by various actors such as local communities and the official heritage management.
- Foster general discussions about how the recent past can be experienced and used in different ways. This means that the recent past and its multivocality can be used as a democratic historical resource.
- Interact with the local communities in such a way that they have the democratic possibility to take active part in the construction and reuse of the cultural heritage.
- Compare the site at Santa Cruz de los Pinos with the after-use of contemporary archaeological Swedish sites and landscapes that are not yet fully recognized as cultural heritage assets.
- Discussing the possibilities of getting the former Soviet missile site at Santa Cruz de los Pinos, Cuba, recognized as a cultural heritage site of national as well as international importance.

Relationship to other research

The project is mainly related to two orientations of research. *Firstly* to the historical research of the Missile Crisis as it comes forward in a number of works. *Secondly*, the project is related to the research field of fearsome heritage, a field that amongst others approaches different forms of cultural heritage that are poorly understood, and neglected by the research, since it contains memories that societies and humans tend to forget since they are painful remainders of the darker side of the human nature. For instance, concentration camps, military remains and colonialism (Buchli & Lucas 2001a; Schofield & Cocroft eds. 2007; Cox & Bell 1999; Doretti & Fondebrider 2001; Saunders 2002; McDavid 1997; Hall 2000; Wilkie 2001; Carman ed. 1997; Dobinson 2001; Legendre 2001; Saunders ed. 2004; Burström, Gustafsson & Karlsson 2006). During the last decade the interest within this field has partly been focused towards material remains from the Cold War. The reason for this is that many military installations from this period now are abandoned by the military and instead have become a responsibility for the heritage management (cf. English Heritage 2002; Cocroft & Thomas 2003; Schofield, Johnson & Beck eds. 2002; Schofield 2005; Allen 2005; Hutchings 2005; Schmidt & von Preuschen 2005). On a general level the project is related to the directions of this research. There is however some circumstances that make the project stand out as unique from other project directed towards the fearsome heritage from the Cold War. For instance: that no contemporary archaeological project has been carried out focusing on the former Soviet missile sites on Cuba, and that the project focuses on the different forms of after-use of the specific missile site and its landscape as expressed in various ways by different actors such as local communities and the heritage management.

Partners

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