

The October Crisis (1962), beyond the dominating narration:
*Archaeological and anthropological approaches towards the former
Soviet missile sites in Cuba*

The meta-level of the October Crisis (October 1962) has been profoundly documented and researched by historians with a focus on its influences over world politics during the Cold War. These investigations have often taken their point of departure in arguments that focus on the military-strategic dimensions of the crisis, the top-level diplomacy, the leaders of the two superpowers etc.

As a consequence of the continuous presentation of the overall narrative of the crisis in the form of its development and internal dynamics other sides of the crisis have been neglected and suppressed. Not least, this applies to the material remains found on the former missile bases, and for the memories and stories held by people from the villages and communities surrounding them. Therefore, what has never been researched before is the material and social history of the ruins of the former Soviet nuclear missile sites in Cuba as cultural heritage. That is until now! In this respect, the project is unique since it is the only project that is working on this material.

During the last decade, the project has approached the crisis from contemporary archaeological and cultural heritage perspectives and the central questions have been;

- To what extent can the dominating narration of the October Crisis be complemented and enriched by tangible and intangible remains, and their specific “from below” stories,
- To the extent that this is the case, in what manner can the dominating narration be complemented and challenged by new insights?

The focus has been on the hitherto unknown and under-researched tangible and intangible remains of the missile sites on the Cuban countryside. Research has been directed towards the multi-vocal memories held by people in the local communities and the countryside surrounding these sites, and towards the reuse of the sites at El Cacho and Santa Cruz de los Pinos as heritage resources for social sustainable purposes. These “from-below” dimensions of the crisis are a unique and valuable complements to the meta-history, as they provide a local post-event history spanning a 50-year long period, and since they can provide new insights about the October Crisis and its human dimensions, and complement the dominating narration of the crisis.