

ANNUAL REPORT: Spain – Civil War 2016 FIELD SCHOOL

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[Excavating a Spanish Civil War trench filled with alluvium]

Our project on the remains of the Spanish Civil War in Madrid started with one simple question: can archaeology change substantially the accepted narrative of a major historical episode of the recent past? After one month of excavations and surveys, we can answer in the positive. Our work has been able to change quite dramatically the established account of one of the major military encounters of the Spanish Civil War: the battle of Madrid (November 1936), the prelude to all modern urban warfare and the first time the advance of fascism was stopped in Europe. Perhaps more importantly, we have been able to challenge the dominant narrative *by archaeological means alone*. We have proved that the battle developed in a different way than previously thought, that the units who decided the fate of the encounter were others, and that it could have had a totally different outcome. In general terms, by exposing the gaps of official records and personal memories alike, we have shown that archaeology is one of the social sciences best suited to approach the dynamics of modern battles and its spatial materialization. At the same time, our project has gone beyond the usual scope of battlefield archaeology in two ways: we have adopted a landscape perspective to understand the social behavior underpinning organized violence and we have collected geological samples for analyzing environmental processes taking place during the last 80 years. We believe that our research can contribute with original new data to current debates on the nature of the Anthropocene.

Students have participated in all fieldwork and laboratory activities. Fieldwork consisted mainly in excavation (both open area and test-pitting), although we also carried out field-walking and

systematic metal detector survey. Students were taught about basic archaeological field techniques, from setting up an excavation using a total station to record artifacts and features with smartphones via an app designed specifically for this project. We defend a reflective approach to the excavation process: students are encouraged to understand digging as an intellectual activity that involves interpretation at every stage, even for the most mundane actions, such as sweeping or using the pick. From this perspective, the fact that students come from diverse cultural and national backgrounds is particularly enriching. The ongoing discussion on the features under excavation and the methods employed to characterize them is an important part of the fieldwork experience through which students, faculty and team learn together and produce knowledge. We also believe in that students have to be capable of undertaking responsibilities and therefore encourage them to take the lead in some research activities. Modern conflict archaeology offers a variety of scenarios in which this is possible, such as metal detector survey.

The results of this first field season have been disseminated and will be disseminated in a variety of ways. We are strongly committed to public archaeology and believe in real time circulation of our work. We keep a very active blog and a Facebook profile. The blog (guerraenlauniversidad.blogspot.com) received over 100,000 hits during the month of July and our Facebook page was visited by an average of 12,000 people per day for the duration of the field season. We also organized a successful open day with over a hundred visitors. Our research has benefitted from wide coverage in the national media, including the main TV channels and newspapers. A summary of the news is also available in English:

http://spanishnewstoday.com/madrid-archeologists-rewrite-civil-war-history_78181-a.html

Regarding the academic public, we believe in a fast turnaround for fieldwork data, so that they can immediately enter academic discussions. Thus, an article with preliminary results was produced a month after the end of the season and will be published between the end of this year and the beginning of 2017 (in an edited volume on the archaeology of the Spanish Civil War to appear with British Archaeological Reports). The final report will be ready by the month of November and made available online in open access on the institutional repository of the Spanish National Research Council (digital.csic.es). Both the article and the report are in Spanish, but we have another one in preparation in English for a major journal, where we will compare the results of the last field season with other war scenarios excavated in previous years.