

Valencian Landscapes of War

An approach to the Spanish Civil War in the Valencian towns through the cultural heritage

LANDSCAPES OF WAR

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Example 1. The fortified line XYZ: a direct combat zone

The offensive over Valencia

In the spring of 1938, Franco's army started an offensive to take the city of Valencia.

In the first stage of the attack, Castellón de la Plana, Onda and Vila-Real were captured by Franco's army.

The offensive went on to the coastline and the inland of Sierra de Espadán and was held back by the Government's (republican) army in the so-called Line XYZ.

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The fortified line known as XYZ stretched from East to West, from the sea, in Almenara, province of Castellón, to the foothills of the Iberian mountains, in the province of Cuenca.

Its construction started in May 1938 and nearly 6.000 men worked on it.

In July 1938 the frontline stopped and settled opposite the XYZ Line; the fortified lines of both sides were, then, face to face.

Nowadays, a great amount of remnants of the fortifications of the XYZ Line still survive in different degrees of preservation.



Several defensive lines constructed in Valencia region during the Spanish Civil War
(Source. Edelmir Galdón)

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Several elements
of the fortified

XYZ Line as they
are preserved at
present.

*(Source. Edelmir
Galdón)*



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EXTRA TEACHING MATERIALS

Additional information (only in Spanish and Valencian)

- Contact lines of defence [.pdf](#)
- The offensive over Valencia and the Alto Palancia [.pdf](#)
- The XYZ Line [.pdf](#)
- Onda: war scene and testimonies [.pdf](#)

Teacher material to prepare the visit and the study of two landscapes of war of the XYZ Line (only in Spanish) [.doc](#)

- Trenches and military buildings in Viver, Castellón
- Trenches and military buildings face to face. “Paraje de las dos tetas”. Sierra de Espadán, Castellón

Example 2. Valencia's Immediate Line of Defence: a rearguard line of defence

When Franco's troops occupied Castellón de la Plana, 60 km away from Valencia, the vulnerability of the capital and the need of building defences was further evident.

In the Summer of 1938 the construction of a fortified line which sought to prevent the capture of Valencia started. The line is also known as 'Immediate Line' or Line El Puig-Cara-sols and it never witnessed any battle.

Nowadays, many remnants of the line survive and there are several popular initiatives for its preservation, protection and social use.

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The fortified Line El Puig-Cara-sols was the closest line of defence to the city of Valencia.

It starts in El Puig and ends in Cara-sols, in Ribarroja, crossing the municipal areas of Rafelbunyol, Náquera, Moncada, Bétera and Paterna.

The military and civil authorities of Valencia and its region were responsible for its construction, and voluntary workers, conscripts and prisoners worked in it.

Nowadays, remnants of trenches, casemates, shelters, shot positions, underground corridors and magazines still survive throughout the Line.

The cultural value of these remnants could be incorporated into the natural values of the landscape where they lie along the route of the Line.



Approximate delineation of El Puig – Cara-sols Line.

(Source. *Proyecto Paisajes de Guerra*)

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Several elements of El Puig – Cara-sols Line as they are preserved at present.
(Source. José Durbán)

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Wartime propaganda summoning to enlist to construct the El Puig – Cara-sols Line. (Source. José Durbán)

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EXTRA TEACHING MATERIALS

Additional information (only in Spanish and Valencian)

- Rearguard lines of defence [.pdf](#)
- The Line El Puig-Cara-sols: a rearguard line and an example of tourist route [.pdf](#)

Teacher material to prepare the visit and the study of two landscapes of war of the Valencia's Immediate Line of Defence (only in Spanish) [.doc](#)

- Woodland of Vallesa de Mandor in Paterna/L'Eliana
- Mountain of 'la Patà' in El Puig

Example 3. Air-raid shelters: the protection of civil population in Valencian towns

During the Spanish Civil War, most part of the Valencian region remained under control of the Republic. This is the reason why the three capitals and many other towns were intensely bombarded by Franco's air force and the Armada (with the help of Germany and Italy). The aim was to damage the economy and the government's war infrastructure, and to intimidate the civil population.

The government of the Republic (Committee of Passive Defence) built and fitted out hundreds of shelters and underground spaces to protect the civil population. Some of them still survive and could be restored for different social uses at present.

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The city of Valencia, for example, suffered 442 bombardments in the course of the war with a result of 925 people dead, 2831 people injured and 930 buildings destroyed.

In February 1937, the city had only 73 premises fitted out as air-raid shelters with room for 20.000 seats.

After the effort of the Committee of Passive Defence, two years later, in February 1939, the city had 173 premises (including the building of shelters and the fitting out of basements) with room for 40.000 people, the 12% of the population (estimated in 318.144 people).

It is worth highlighting that many shelters were built in the courtyards and gardens of schools, such as those of the Cervantes, the Luis Vives, the Grupo Escolar Balmes and the Asilo de la Lactancia.



Air-raid shelters in Valencia's Plaza del Patriarca and Plaza de la Virgen, now gone
(Source. Archivo Histórico Municipal de Valencia)

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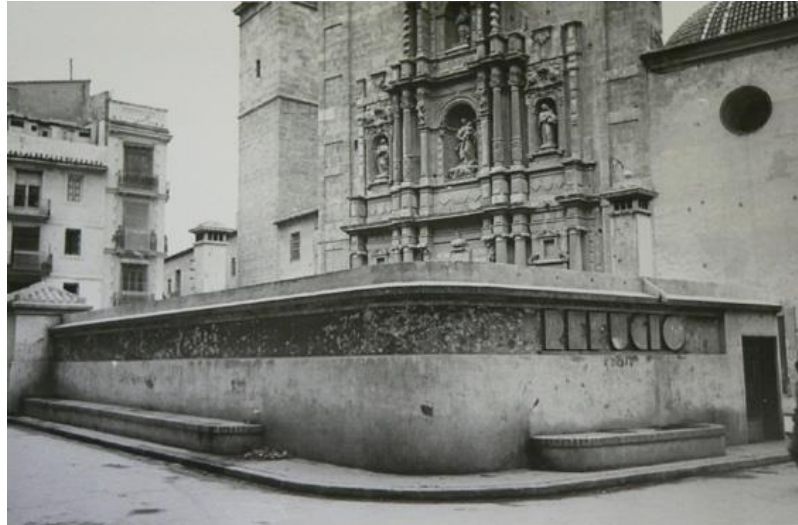
The shelter has a vault, usually with two descent accesses with several stretches which change their direction. The structure in zigzag prevents the grapeshot and the blast of bombs from entering the shelter. The entrances must be placed in opposite or far-off points. Concrete and girders were scarce so the materials used in its building depended on the possibilities to get them. The design is determined by the technical possibilities of the soil and by the abilities of the engineers.



Current images of air-raid shelters in Alcoi and Valencia's Calle de Serranos.

(Source. Ayuntamiento de Alcoi & Edelmir Galdón)

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Almost all the Valencian shelters stood during the Second World War, but they started to be demolished from the 1950s. The demolition was often partial. Only the upper part of the shelter, if it existed, was demolished and the rooms remained intact under the pavement. This fact has allowed to rediscover some lost shelters and some others which were not documented.

Some Valencian towns have preserved and restored civil shelters from the Civil War. Alcoi is the best example as it has restored the Cervantes shelter, one of the 25 which the town had. At present, the shelter is home to a permanent exhibition that recreates the daily life of the war with pictures and documentaries full of direct testimonies.



Equally, La Pobla Duc has rehabilitated the two shelters comprised in the Missena military airfield, built by the republican army in the spring of 1938, which now can be visited as part of a wider cultural and tourist route.

Old shelter in the Plaza del Carmen, in Valencia, during the Spanish Civil War (above), currently demolished (below).

(Source. Archivo Histórico Municipal de Valencia & CVC)

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EXTRA TEACHING MATERIALS

Additional information (only in Spanish and Valencian)

- The protection of the civil population [.pdf](#)
- The cultural heritage of the Spanish Civil War in Alcoi (1 and 2) [.pdf](#)

Teacher material to prepare the visit and the study of two landscapes of war with restored air-raid shelters (only in Spanish) [.doc](#)

- Visit to the Cervantes shelter, of the Spanish Civil War, in Alcoi
- Visit to the route of the shelters of the Spanish Civil War in the Pobla del Duc

Example 4. Places of refuge in Valle del Vinalopó: the humanitarian face of the conflict

The region of Alicante was a republican rearguard zone and it acted as a refuge for the republican troops as the frontline withdrew.

The shire of Valle del Vinalopó (Elda, Monovar, Petrer and Sax) in particular was the main scene of the last days of the Civil War. The last meetings of Dr. Negrín's republican government took place there.

Many buildings of the shire were fitted out to be used as war hospitals, residences for evacuee families and school housing states.

Many of these places still survive and there is an inter-local project to preserve them which includes the sites in cultural and tourist routes.

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After the fall of Catalonia in 1939, the republican government moved to the Alicante's shire of Valle del Vinalopó.

The farm 'El Poblet' in Petrer, known then as 'Posición Yuste', was the last residence of the last president of the Second Republic, Dr. Juan Negrín. Negrín held some of the cabinet meetings of his Government in this residence. (Picture above).

After the coup d'état of the republican colonel Casado in Madrid (against the government of the Republic), Dr. Negrín, other leaders of the government and the Communist Party fled to the exile from the airfield of 'El Fondó', in Monovar. (Picture below)



Villa 'El Poblet', in Petrer, last residence of the president Juan Negrín in Spain; and air-raid shelter in the Monovar place known as 'El Fondó'.

(Source. Juan Manuel Martínez Lorenzo & Mancomunidad Intermunicipal del Valle del Vinalopó)

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Many families escaped from the frontline and emigrated to Valle del Vinalopó due to the greater sense of security felt in the province of Alicante as a rearguard zone.

Many buildings were fitted out to house those evacuee families; others housed scholar communities for orphan and displaced children from the conflict, and some others became hospitals.

The cultural project 'Territorio de acogida' of the Association of Valle del Vinalopó has located more than 90 buildings and sites related to the late period of the war and to the solidarity of the locals with the needy people and with those who fled from the conflict.



The current garden of the Music, in Elda, acted as war hospital for the International Brigades. Below, the war hospital of the Socorro Rojo Internacional in Monovar.

(Source. Mancomunidad Intermunicipal del Valle del Vinalopó & José Ramón Valero)

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EXTRA TEACHING MATERIALS

Additional information (only in Spanish and Valencian)

- Places of refuge in Valle del Vinalopó and the cultural project 'Territorio de acogida' [.pdf](#)

Teacher material to prepare the visit and the study of the landscapes of war and the places of refuge in Valle del Vinalopó (only in Spanish) [.doc](#)

- Visit to the landscapes of war related to the end of the Spanish Civil war and the places of refuge in the Alicante's shire of Valle del Vinalopó