Special section
Archaeology in Czechoslovakia: trends and approaches

Whatever the journalist's definition of eastern Europe might be (*cf.* S. Milisauskas in ANTIQUITY 64: 283), let us state, as introduction to this Special Section, that Czechoslovakia (FIGURE 1) is a country in Central, not Eastern, Europe. It is somewhat controversial to speak about its 'return to Europe', as some politicians would have it, as it has been there all the time. After the period of limited contacts of Czechoslovak archaeologists with their colleagues 'in the West' it is felt that now, in the changed (post-November-1989) situation, information on the current state of research, and especially on the approaches applied recently to the study of Czech and Slovak archaeological material (and perhaps on Czechoslovakia's geographical position as well?) may be of use for an interested English-speaking reader. The following – rather random – selection of articles is the result.*

Just a few notes might perhaps help in understanding the background to current archaeological research in Czechoslovakia. After the archaeological 'boom' of the 1950s–60s, when large projects (e.g. Early Medieval [Slavic period] monument excavations) were supported by the government mostly for political reasons, the increase of extensive industrial activities led to a changed concept of archaeological field work in the 1970s. Large areas had to be excavated under time pressure in the absence of adequate technical support. The positivist view prevailed, to a great extent a result of isolation from theories being developed elsewhere. At the same time a very limited number of archaeological monographs could be published, and theoretical work was encouraged within the limits of orthodox Marxism only. Hardly any free discussion was taking



FIGURE 1. *Czechoslovakia, its place in Europe and* regions.

* Editors' thanks go to J. Bujna who collated the contributions of the Slovak authors.

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place, as any attempts in this direction were classified as an offence to the leading rôle of the Communist party. The results of this situation are well known. Large collections of archaeological data were assembled, hundreds of hectares of land being more or less completely excavated, but adequate published information was lacking. The amount of the material, however, put pressure on the researchers to devise coherent classification systems. At last, new theoretical models were applied not only to the study of artefacts and sites, but also to the strategy of reconstructing past societies as a whole. Settlement studies started to shift, though slowly and on various levels, from artefactual to contextual archaeology. The work already in progress in Czechoslovakia, in theory as well as in case-studies based on new materials, is reflected in the papers presented here.

In this special section:

Slavomil Vencl studies spatio-temporal changes in the frequency of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites, in relation to the traditions of research in Central Europe.

Martin Oliva shows the potentials and limitations of lithic studies with the example of the most specific central European culture from the Middle/Upper Palaeolithic transition – the Szeletian.

Evžen Neustupný presents a theoretical model of the 'community area' concept valid for prehistoric farming societies in general.

Martin Kuna develops and tests the community area concept by means of a landscape project in Central Bohemia.

Juraj Pavúk examines a special type of Lengyel Culture settlement site in Slovakia which might create a good base for the study of spatial organization and site hierarchy.

Peter Romsauer demonstrates the problem of local economic progress stimulated by long-distance trade contacts, as reflected in wheel-turned pottery produced in the Carpathian Basin during the Hallstatt period.

Jozef Bujna considers Late Hallstatt East–Central European relative chronology and culture change as demonstrated by the evolution of one pottery form.

Karol Pieta reviews the Early Migration period settlement of the North Carpathians, offering themes for further study of processes taking place in peripheral zones.

Petr Meduna & Eva Černá display a theoretical model for the study of early medieval settlement structure in a selected area in North Bohemia.

Jan Klápště presents a strategy for medieval studies in Bohemia, with recognition of mobility and stability in the ordering of communities and their areas.

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