



Archaeo-propaganda: The History of Political Engagement in Archaeology in Central Europe

Jan Turek, Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, v.v.i.,
 Letenská 4, 118 01, Prague 1, Czech Republic
 E-mail: turek@arup.cas.cz

ABSTRACT

Archaeology, a science studying material sources with which mankind shaped their world and social relations in the past, may appear to be an apolitical discipline. In fact, the opposite is true. National and ideological propagandists have long set their eyes on archaeology, since its very beginnings. In this paper I am trying to give a brief overview of the development of ideology in archaeology and its application, as well as its engagement in the formation of political propaganda in the modern history of Central and Eastern Europe. In today's globalised world, archaeology is confronted on a daily basis with changes in public opinion, with the development of the society in a diverse geopolitical context, but also with a wide range of human rights issues. There is no doubt that archaeology, as a social science, cannot develop in isolation from changes in the society and, quite to the contrary, that it is destined to reflect on major societal issues of our time. Although modern archaeology is profoundly affected by the current intellectual societal demand and ideology, archaeologists openly admit that their science is not apolitical and timeless. This awareness could hopefully help prevent its unfortunate political engagement and use for the propaganda of ideologies and regimes in the future.

Résumé: L'archéologie, une science qui étudie les sources matérielles utilisées par l'homme dans le passé pour façonner son monde et ses relations sociales, peut donner l'impression d'être une discipline apolitique. Le contraire est pourtant vrai. Les propagandistes nationaux et idéologiques utilisent l'archéologie depuis ses tous débuts. Dans le présent article, j'essaie de dresser un aperçu du développement de l'idéologie en archéologie et de son contexte, ainsi que de son implication dans la formation de la propagande politique de l'histoire moderne de l'Europe centrale et de l'Est. En cette époque de mondialisation, l'archéologie est confrontée quotidiennement aux fluctuations de l'opinion publique et au développement de la société dans un contexte géopolitique diversifié, en

plus d'une vaste gamme de problèmes relatifs aux droits de l'homme. Nul ne doute que l'archéologie, comme science sociale, est incapable d'évoluer à l'écart des modulations de la société et qu'elle est, bien au contraire, destinée à être le reflet des principaux problèmes sociétaux de notre ère. Même si l'archéologie moderne est profondément touchée par la demande et l'idéologie sociétales intellectuelles actuelles, les archéologues admettent ouvertement que leur science n'est pas apolitique ni intemporelle. Cette prise de conscience pourrait, avec un peu de chance, prévenir son regrettable engagement politique et son utilisation aux fins de propagande future d'idéologies et de régimes.

Resumen: La arqueología, una ciencia que estudia fuentes de materiales con los cuales la humanidad formó su mundo y sus relaciones sociales en el pasado, puede parecer que es una disciplina apolítica. La verdad es lo contrario. Los propagandistas nacionales e ideológicos han utilizado a la arqueología desde hace mucho tiempo, desde su comienzo. En este artículo estoy tratando de dar una breve descripción sobre el desarrollo y la aplicación de ideología en la arqueología, así como de su participación en la formación de propaganda política en la historia moderna de Europa Central y Oriental. En el mundo globalizado de hoy, la arqueología se enfrenta a diario con cambios en la opinión pública, con el desarrollo de la sociedad en un contexto geopolítico diverso, pero también con una amplia gama de cuestiones de derechos humanos. No hay duda de que la arqueología, como ciencia social, no puede desarrollarse aisladamente de los cambios que ocurren en la sociedad y que, por el contrario, está destinada a reflejarse sobre los principales problemas sociales de nuestro tiempo. Aunque la arqueología moderna se ve profundamente afectada por la demanda intelectual y la ideología actual de la sociedad, los arqueólogos admiten abiertamente que su ciencia no es apolítica ni eterna. Esta toma de conciencia quizás podría ayudar a evitar su desafortunada participación política y su uso para la propaganda de ideologías y regímenes en el futuro.

KEY WORDS

Propaganda, Political engagement of archaeology, Central and Eastern Europe, Totalitarian regimes, History of archaeology

Many of us, archaeologists in Central and Eastern Europe, vividly remember the often degrading conditions of life and work in a totalitarian political system. It is undoubtedly better to live a life in a democratic state system with guaranteed freedoms of speech, religion and movement of people, but witnesses usually agree that experiencing life in totalitarianism

is useful and increases our sensitivity to any manifestations of encroachment on freedom and human rights.

Personal Recollection as a Start

I remember when, more than 30 years ago, towards the end of Communist normalisation in Czechoslovakia, I strove for admission to study archaeology. Since I had not studied the *gymnasium* (high school/college) and, instead, had been vocationally educated in reproduction graphics, I had spent more than a third of my secondary studies with on-the-job training in a printing shop. I envied *gymnasium* students their Latin and history lessons and feared that the lack of classical education would be a major disadvantage for my admission to the Faculty of Philosophy. More than a year before the admission process, however, I asked Professor (then Associate Professor) Miroslav Buchvaldek to review my paper for the Secondary Vocational Activities project, run by the Socialist Union of Youth (SSM). During our talk I expressed my wish to study archaeology and mentioned my concerns of this handicap. His view surprised me very much. He told me: "...but it's a political advantage, my dear colleague! For the comrades from the Faculty, you actually come from the working class, and it's rather an advantage". I do not know if this "working class background" helped me in any way but I was admitted at the first try (In Prague they only accepted 6 out of more than 60 applicants at that time); for me this was the first experience of how deep the "class struggle" was embedded in the academic life under socialism. In addition to properly admitted applicants, there were also students from families of more or less prominent Communist officials admitted for study through diverse appeals procedures. I remember that Miroslav Buchvaldek, who could not be at the helm of the department due to political reasons, was very displeased with this favouritism, also because no new students were originally supposed to be accepted that year and the decision to do so was taken by the faculty management without any consultations with the department. However, this was all commonplace during the era of real socialism. The admission procedure was accompanied by interviews with representatives of the Socialistic Union of Youth (usually students majoring in Scientific Communism), where I was asked whether I considered candidacy for the Communist Party. I got out of this quandary by saying that I was not mature enough for such a decision, a reason used by many people. As I learnt later, party candidacy was a condition for becoming a fellow lecturer and staying at the department in the 1980s. On the same note, Marxism-Leninism and related topics, such as political economics and the history of the international workers' movement, accounted for more than a third of the content of archaeologi-

cal studies. Added to this was training at the Military Department for men, undertaken one day a week, which allowed graduates to do a 1-year shorter military service instead of the normal 2 years. Even this military practice was, however, a very clumsy attempt at political indoctrination. After the Communist coup in February 1948, the Czechoslovak People's Army was purged very thoroughly to get rid of non-Communist professional officers, who were replaced with proletarian cadres, often barely literate. Their brainwashing attempts at the Military Department were primitive, ridiculous and bitterly comical for young intellectuals (Luňák and Pečenka 2014). Among other things, we learnt from their pseudo-ideological trainings that we, as soldiers of the Czechoslovak People's Army, would take part in the capture of Strasbourg (in direct contradiction with the official Soviet propaganda which denied the possibility of any aggression against the West). No matter how comical these ideological concepts may appear after many years, it was very unpleasant for any student to be expelled from the training at the Military Faculty because after their graduation they would not be able to start working in science or continue in their education as they were conscripted for compulsory military service for 2 years and were again subjected to a similarly primitive political indoctrination.

The omnipresence of collaborators of the Communist secret police (STB) or even the KGB was a very immoral phenomenon of the then academic life (Neustupný 2017, 156–158). This was witnessed by our German colleague, then student of archaeology at the *Freie Universität* in Berlin, who studied at Charles University in Prague at the end of the 1980s. Shortly after his arrival in Prague he was contacted by a STASI agent asking him for information on the thinking and possible utterances of students from the German Democratic Republic who could entrust him, as someone coming from West Germany, with their attitudes to the socialistic establishment of the Honecker regime. When he strictly refused, he was threatened with immediate termination of his stay and deportation back to the Federal Republic of Germany, but this never came to happen.

Before the fall of the regime, most of us had no idea how widespread this organised denunciation was. There were agents among professors, researchers as well as students. Some were forced to cooperate through extortion, concealed homosexuality, adultery or threats of loss of job or discrimination against children and families. Others agreed to cooperate in exchange for a promise of career advancement, an opportunity to travel to the West and for similar advantages. Today, this whole phenomenon, however reprehensible, is very hard to evaluate collectively. The degree of personal involvement and sins of specific people is now much more a matter of their own conscience. The Czech Republic still has a valid law preventing these registered people from taking leadership positions in state admin-

istration but its validity is hugely challenged by the fact that the current Czech Prime Minister was such a registered agent in Slovakia.

Socialist propaganda always emphasised the safety of living in a system in which the state took care of its citizens, even against their own will. This safety of the “camp of peace” was juxtaposed with imperialistic, dangerous, individualistic and anti-people capitalistic West. To be sure, however, the Communist regime reserved decisions on the possibility to travel abroad, behind the Iron Curtain (McWilliams 2013), i.e. outside the circle of socialistic satellites of the Soviet Union, to itself. Archaeologists from the Eastern bloc were not sent to conferences in the West, and political personnel planners even recommended them to refrain from personal communication with Western researchers who attended international conferences in the East (Neustupný 2017, 161–162). In addition to restricted movement, the ideological and paradigmatic influence from the West was also inhibited by actual censorship of post (E. Neustupný, personal communication) as well as by a significant limitation on scientific literature and periodicals officially imported from the West. These measures, however, did not constitute application of Marxism-Leninism in the theory of archaeological research. According to Evžen Neustupný, those with progressive leanings among Czechoslovak archaeologists strove for something paradigmatically comparable to processualism in the 1960 to 1980s, but an “apolitical” cultural-history paradigm still dominated (Neustupný 2017, 160).

The 1990s were not only a time of tumultuous social changes, but also of joyful freedom of thinking and movement. We entered our professional lives convinced that our work would never serve any regimes and ideologies, that we would live in democracy

Propaganda, Yesterday and Today

Today, as we are getting ready to close the first 20 years of this century, we experience an era in which reliable and well-balanced information is replaced with propaganda-driven misinformation and hoaxes and the desire for truth and freedom seems to be bogged down in a flurry of individual interests. At a time when many democratic institutions in Western democracies are failing morally, the academia has to take a firm stance on social and political issues and offer its professional and moral authority as a point of stability in restless times. Nowadays, loss of democracy does not usually come from a violent, evolutionary breakthrough, but takes the form of a slow weakening of constitutional, democratic rules and reinforcement of autocratic tendencies, a process currently under way in Turkey and Venezuela. However, against the backdrop of propagandistic diversion

from a once-again-to-be superpower, even some European Union countries seem to be susceptible to similar developments. And this is one of the reasons why it should be reminded how archaeology was used and abused by politics and ideologies in the past and how any such engagement must be prevented today.

The public is often convinced that the interpretation of history is something objective and irrefutable. We can agree that the only certainty are the specific dates of events, especially as regards more recent history; and that is about all that can be considered truly objective. Other narratives are always the outcome of historical interpretation. History is written by winners!

If historians attempted to reconstruct the development of the Second World War on the basis of information published in the Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*, without any other resources, they would inevitably arrive at the surprising conclusion that in spite of “6 years of a victorious campaign across Europe” and numerous “victories in battles and tactical re-deployments of armies”, the Third Reich suddenly had to defend the very centre of Berlin in April 1945.

But what about archaeology? What is its role in state and national propaganda? Archaeology, a science studying material sources used by mankind in the past to shape their world and social relationships, may appear to be an apolitical discipline. In fact, the opposite is true. National and ideological propagandists have long set their eyes on archaeology, since its very beginnings.

Christian and Pagan Past

One of the oldest examples of using archaeology in religious propaganda dates back to the 9th century, when archaeology was not yet an established field of study. The famous missionaries Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius were searching for the remains of Saint Clement and in their efforts even used some fundamental archaeological procedures. They estimated the place of Clement’s death based on “expert” liturgical literature and, as part of a mission (in 861) to the Khazars in northern Black Sea region, they organised an expedition to Kherson, where they really discovered a grave. And how did the two brothers from Thessaloniki recognise that it was really Pope Clement’s grave? (Clement took the office in the year 90 AD.) The martyr was drowned with an anchor and they found one. The evidence that this really was the burial ground of St. Clement was obviously very insufficient from today’s point of view but the certainty of their discovery was guaranteed by faith. Ideological expectations were obvious, and the brothers did not hesitate to use their finding in religious propaganda.

They took the remains to Rome, laying the foundations for the spread of the cult of St. Clement throughout Europe (Sklenář 1983).

A fresco image from the 11th century (*Basilica di San Clemente al Laterano*), showing St. Constantine and Methodius bringing the remains of St. Clement to Rome, indicates how this depiction was influenced by the then political commission. The picture was scratched off in two places, specifically where St. Constantine and the Pope held something in their right hands and where something was depicted in front of the Pope, next to the text written in Latin. Those were probably texts written in the Glagolitic (eastern liturgical script), which were undesirable among the public in Rome after the Church Schism of 1054, and therefore were removed.

The preference of Christian monuments was characteristic for the entire Middle Ages, and many statues of many Roman emperors were only preserved because they were mistakenly identified as depictions of Christian emperors. Monuments were strictly classified as Christian or pagan until the early 19th century. Artefacts in the first catalogue of the archaeological collections of the *Museum of the Kingdom of Bohemia* (today the National Museum in Prague) are clearly divided into pagan and Christian antiquities.

Pathos of the Revival Period

The 19th century was a time of establishing the identity of modern European nations. Czechs, as descendants of the Slavs, were at that time looking for their common identity just like Germans, looking for their origins among Germanic tribes. As regards the application of results of archaeological research in national propaganda, we can observe how certain artefacts, for example Bronze Age swords, were used in the arts as props carried by mythical heroes of old Slavs as well as by old Germans. The same applies to the swastika (Figures 1, 2) which was not a purely Germanic symbol; as a sign of sun and fortune it was used by many civilisations of the old world. In German Revival publications, however, this symbol was associated exclusively with Germanic ethnicity (Driesmans 1907, 4–16) and the entire process of Nazification of the swastika was accomplished by Adolf Hitler who selected it as the official symbol of the party and later the entire Third Reich.

However, the national commitment for research of the past also had an undisputed scientific advantage. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Josef Ladislav Píč started compiling a colossal work called *Antiquities of Czech Lands* (1899–1909), whose three volumes summarised archaeological findings from the beginnings of prehistoric times until the Early Middle Ages. It was only the first part of his work, set to be followed by another

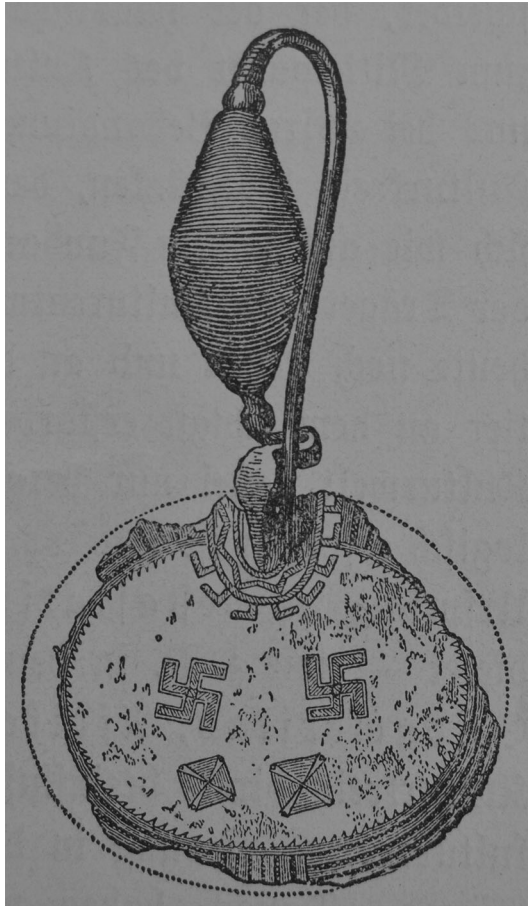


Figure 1. Swastika decoration on an Iron Age fibula (after Driesmans 1907, Abb. 5)

work on the history of old Bohemians, based primarily on the Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and of Zelená Hora. When, however, the manuscripts were confirmed to be counterfeit palimpsests, Píč committed suicide (Sklenář 1974).

The Birth of Nazi Ideology

Prussian nationalism and militarism were deepening with the emergence of the German Empire in 1871. The feeling of German identity and unity had to be reinforced in the new empire. Archaeology and anthropology started profiling as distinctly nationalistic fields of study at that time. After his

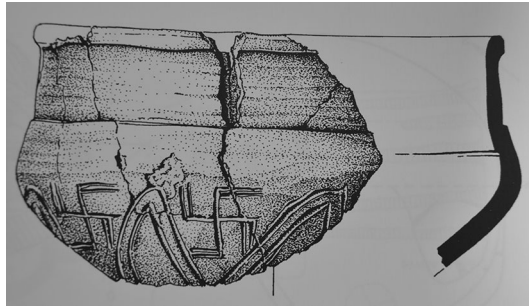


Figure 2. Swastika decoration on a Roman Period pot from Prague-Řeporyje (Turek 2008, Fig. 3)

Troy adventure with Heinrich Schliemann, Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902), a prominent physician, pathologist and anthropologist, set out alone on an expedition to the Caucasus in 1891 to search for the original homeland of the Germans. The propaganda and reasoning of the proponents of pan-Germanic ideas were becoming increasingly aggressive. In 1883, the anthropologist Otto Ammon (1842–1916) published his study “Natural Selection among Humans” (Ammon 1900), emphasizing the superiority and Germanic origin of most of the European nobility. He coined the term *Ari-erdämmerung* (“dawn of the Aryans” cf. Arnold 2006a) to be used in the propaganda dictionary. He warned against a plot of the Slavs and Romance nations against the superior but very vulnerable Aryan race. As far as archaeologists were concerned, Gustaf Kossinna (1858–1931) was a prominent voice; in spite of his undisputed contribution to the development of the field, he also played a role in the spreading of racial hatred because of his “settlement” archaeology which defined cultural zones, contributing to the formulation of the Nazi demand for restoration of the living space which the Germans, as descendants of Old Germans, had lost in the past. He emphasised the superiority of long-skulled Aryan Germans over the short-skulled eastern races of Slavs and Jews. His theories about the territory formerly occupied by the Germanic peoples, based purely on the study of distribution of material culture associated with the Germans (not the peoples as such), became one of the foundations for the expanding Third Reich’s territorial claims later. His arguments concerning German links to Eastern Europe indirectly resulted in claims against the Baltic Sea territory, which became one of the reasons for the split in the alliance between the national and Bolshevik socialism and, ultimately, in the final defeat of Nazism. Kossinna did not live to see this as he died before Adolf Hitler’s ascent to power, but his book *Die Deutsche Vorgeschichte* (Kossinna 1912) was published in many reissues from 1912 until almost the end of the Sec-

ond World War. The Nazi racial propaganda based on historical, archaeological, linguistic and anthropological research led the Germans to admire the Old Germanic world (Figure 3), which they preferred to the antique world, emphasizing the falseness of the “lie about barbarism”.

Hitler’s and some other Nazi officials’ passion for the occult sciences and relics that could be used for propagandistic purposes was also remarkable. Hitler really craved the legendary Arc of the Covenant and St. Longin’s spear and commissioned their search. As instructed by him, Heinrich Himmler sent Otto Rahn (1904–1939) to look for the Holy Grail. Rahn set his eye on the Montségur Castle in the French Pyrenees where, according to legends, the Holy Grail had been hidden by the heretic Cathars in the Middle Ages. He went looking into secret corridors under the castle and its vicinity but found nothing. Some of the Indiana Jones stories by Steven Spielberg, where the archaeologist fights German opponents in the “last crusade”, are not all



Figure 3. A romantic image of a Baiuvarii Germanic aristocratic warrior (after Driesmans 1907, Taf. VIII)

that fictional (Arnold 2006b, 158–160). In the 1930s and 1940s Himmler initiated building modifications to the Wewelsburg Castle to remake it into a mystic spiritual centre of SS units, a kind of new Nazi Camelot. One of the reconstructed study rooms was called Grail, another one King Arthur. There is no conclusive evidence, however, that this was a place where the Holy Grail was to be kept, if found, to strengthen the spirit of SS members as the guardians of the “pagan secret”.

The propagandistic engagement of German science in the fight for Aryan superiority climaxed in the *founding of Ahnenerbe* (research society for German ancestral heritage, Figure 4). It was an SS research institute whose primary mission was to prove the Nazi racial theory of the origin and superiority of Aryans and the leading role of the Nordic race. The institute was founded by Heinrich Himmler and Richard Walter Darré on 1 July 1935. *Ahnenerbe* engaged in archaeological, anthropological and historical research and organised a variety of scientific and pseudo-scientific expeditions. The most famous among them was probably an expedition to Tibet led by the zoologist and SS officer Schäfer in 1938–39. The racial ethnographer Hans F. K. Günther (1891–1968) assumed that Aryans conquered most of Asia in about 2000 BC and attacked China and Japan and that Buddha himself was an Aryan of the Nordic race (Günther 1934). His student, then 26-year-old Bruno Beger (1911–2009, Figure 5), tried to confirm his theory in the expedition. *Ahnenerbe* had far-reaching plans for further expeditions to seek Aryan roots in Bolivia, Iran, Iceland and the Canary Islands, but the war events directed its activities onto the conquered territories where it organised and transported local cultural heritage to Germany. Other horrible acts included war experiments on prisoners in the Dachau concentration camp and the formation of a comparative collection of Jewish skeletons in Strasbourg, also arranged under the auspices of

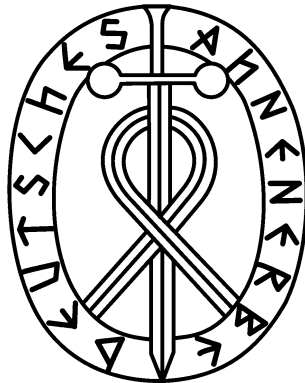


Figure 4. *Ahnenerbe* emblem (photograph by J. Turek)

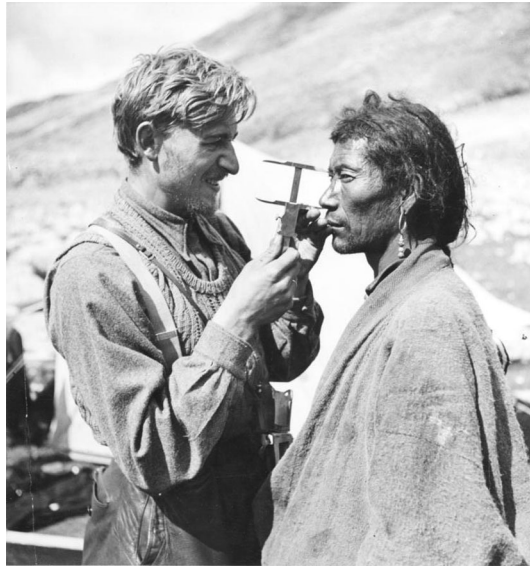


Figure 5. The Nazi anthropologist Beger at the *SS-Ahnenerbe* expedition to Tibet in 1938 examines the supposed Aryan origin of the local population (after Turek 2017)

Ahnenerbe. After Germany's unconditional surrender the institute was cancelled and some of its members brought to court. The aforementioned Bruno Beger appeared before court only 34 years later, in 1971. He was sentenced to 3 years in prison, but with a generous conditional suspension, for a share in the murder of 86 Jewish prisoners.

Propaganda During Nazi Occupation and in Socialist Czechoslovakia

German occupation had a profound impact on Czech intellectuals. After the closure of universities on 17 November 1939, the Reich authorities made it absolutely clear that educating the Czech intelligentsia in the future was undesirable. Several scientific and cultural institutions continued in their activities even at the time of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Archaeological research was carried out primarily by the Institute of Archaeology in Prague (formerly the State Archaeological Institute), which even supported research on sites associated with the formation of the early medieval Bohemian state (eg. Borkovskij's research in Levý Hradec). German propaganda seems to have understood the nationalist underpinnings of archaeological research. In addition, the cult of St. Wenceslas, a Přemys-

lid, was supported by the Czech collaborationist association *National Alliance (Národní souručenství)*, for which it symbolised, in friendly relationships with the Reich, the historically subordinate position of Czechs versus Germans. The Nazi pamphlet *Böhmen und Mähren gehören zum Reich* (“Bohemia and Moravia are part of the Reich”): *Bilder aus der Vor- und Frühgeschichte des Sudeten- B Karpaten-Raumes* was published by NSDAP SS Hauptamt as a closure of archaeology in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia under the control of the Third Reich; it was compiled by an anonymous author and officially authorised by the SS Fuhrer (Der Reichsführer der SS-Heinrich Himmler 1945).

During occupation, the Museum of Prague Prehistory (today part of the Prague City Museum) was renamed to *Markomanisches Museum* and its activities were clearly aimed at the preservation and study of Germanic monuments while suppressing monuments from other periods. Paradoxically, C. Streit and I. Kikebusch decided, toward the very end of the war, to save “Marcomannic” monuments (ie. “Germanic” monuments from the times of the Roman Empire) and took them to the castle in Mníšek pod Brdy, made available to SS units by its owner Theodorich, Freiherr Kast of Ebelsberg. While Prague and the museum collections were hardly damaged, part of the collection hidden at the Mníšek pod Brdy castle was destroyed during liberation.

Czech archaeologists in the Protectorate were not allowed to publish their Czech journals; they could only publish in the new German-language journal *Altböhmen und Altmähren*, or in the compatriot magazine *Sudeta*. As witnessed in the narrative of Václav Spurný (Turek 2007), the conditions in the Institute of Archaeology were somewhat freer at the beginning of occupation. Jaroslav Böhm, initially in charge of the Institute, hired Václav Spurný and Miloš Šolle as volunteers. They were not able to continue in their studies after the closure of universities, so Böhm prepared informal seminars for them in his study room. Later, however, both of them and Böhm were sent to the Reich for work under the *Totaleinsatz*. At that time the Institute was headed by Lothar Zotz (1899–1967), a professional who was not a member of NSDAP and had a certain degree of understanding for his Czech colleagues. In 1943 he was unfortunately sent to the front and was replaced by Camille Streit, a fanatical Nazi with a long-term plan of annihilating Czech archaeology (Turek 2007); luckily, the war developed faster.

Development in the post-war period took the opposite direction. German archaeologists were removed, together with the other German population of Czechoslovakia. Archaeology in the Sudetenland did not get back on track until the 1960s and 1970s. Political propaganda after the war supported only research of early medieval sites associated with Slavic ethnicity. This is when “Slavic archaeology” emerged. This propaganda not only

stressed the Slavic origins of Czechs and Slovaks, but first and foremost searched for common roots with Russians, as a proof of unwavering friendship with the Soviet Union with which we were supposed to go together “for ever” ... “and never otherwise!”. Research into the Palaeolithic period and the beginnings of mankind was also supported, in particular as an expression of the Communist animosity to Church in the early 1950s. After the Soviet invasion in 1968, interest in “Slavic” monuments rather declined and research of sites from other eras started flourishing, for example from the La Tène culture associated with ancient Celts; however, there were no propagandistic reasons for this.

Marxism: Propaganda Instead of Scientific Paradigm

It is remarkable to watch how the official ideology of the Communist Party was applied in Czech archaeology. Marxism, or Marxism–Leninism, was a key element of the obligatory socialistic world view but it did not penetrate archaeological research as a paradigm almost at all. It is a paradox, especially when compared with British archaeology where scientific Marxism was introduced by Vere Gordon Child (1892–1957), who established terms such as “Neolithic Revolution” within the interpretative framework. In the context of British archaeology, Marxism must be evaluated as a very progressive paradigm that interfered with the tradition of cultural-history archaeology, laying the foundations for the development of other modern paradigms (processualism, post-processualism). Czechoslovak archaeology remained almost unaffected by this thinking. The thinking and work of archaeologists were still profoundly dominated by the cultural-history paradigm with a focus on the typology of artefacts and their chronology. It is amusing to see how some Czechoslovak researchers from the Communist era abundantly referred to Marxism-Leninism, class struggle and a socially fair, advanced and progressive socialistic society in the forewords of their books only to use, in the subsequent text, cultural-history archaeological analysis of artefacts based on the tradition of archaeology from the beginning of the 20th century. Propaganda of the Communist Party was gratified thereby and the archaeologist could get back to their artefactual routine. The Communist Bohuslav Chropovský, a prominent Czechoslovak archaeologist of the post-war period, wrote, in his wildly unsubstantial editorial on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the following. “Identification and scientific demonstration of Mesolithic cultures overcame bourgeois opinions not only in Czechoslovakia, but in the whole Central Europe” (Chropovský 1971, 288). From today’s point of view, his remark on bourgeois researchers who prevented advancement in the understanding of the European Mesolithic sounds

almost comical. Chropovský then emphasised that: “archaeology as a societal field of study must have only one possible philosophical and methodological foundation in our society—historical materialism”. Toward the end of his celebration of Communist archaeology, the author sighed: “Little attention was paid to profound criticism of reactionary idealistic opinions, papers lacked and still lack criticism stemming from the principal positions of Marxist-Leninist theory” (Chropovský 1971, 289). At the end of his ideological essay Chropovský quoted his Communist idol V. I. Lenin: “we can only build a proletarian culture by thoroughly getting to know the culture formed by the entire development of mankind, by redrawing it; it is necessary to analyse the best outcomes of the hundreds of years of human civilisation and science must become the property of all people” (Chropovský 1971, 289–290). Chropovský openly wrote of the need to educate people so they could properly evaluate history from the Marxist standpoint. This patronizing approach to the public was also typical for the relationship of the totalitarian Communist power to its citizens. Eduard Krekovič (2013, 267) describes Chropovský’s later activities in the management of the Institute of Archaeology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Nitra, where he was in charge of theoretical and methodological Marxist propaganda in the 1970s and organised a rather unsubstantial symposium on methodological issues and Marxist categories in archaeology (Chropovský 1978).

The only person who surpassed the shadows of the old paradigm and non-scientific Marxism-Leninism was Professor Evžen Neustupný (Figure 6), who used a non-vulgarised Marxist approach to the analysis and interpretation of social relationships at the end of the Stone Age in his study on the beginnings of patriarchy in Central Europe (Neustupný 1967). In this way he created an absolutely exceptional and inspiring breakthrough against the traditional paradigm in Czechoslovak archaeology, approximating the discipline to the then modern directions of thought in the free world. In spite of its undisputed influence, this book was pushed to the background during normalisation (after the Soviet invasion in August 1968), also because the author quoted unacceptable resources, such as economic essays by the reformist Ota Šik.

Heritage of Great Moravia and the Cult of St. Cyril and Methodius

In the socialistic Czechoslovakia, the phenomenon of Great Moravia (*Moravia Magna*) was systematically used in the Communist propaganda. The liturgical ties between Great Moravia and eastern Christianity and the Cyrillic emphasised joint historical roots with Russia. However, there were



Figure 6. Professor Evžen Neustupný (photograph by: J. Turek)

also “federal themes” describing Great Moravia as the “First State of Czechs and Slovaks”. Some Czechoslovak historians and archaeologists of the Early Middle Ages (Pouлік and Chropovský 1985) served the regime’s propaganda in their interpretation of history and presented to the public a purposely construed picture of the coexistence of two nations which had not even existed in the 9th century at all. However, national exploitation of the heritage of Great Moravia still continues to some extent. Great Moravia, symbolised by the Byzantine missionaries Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius, is, for some Slovak politicians, a principal “state” unit existing before the arrival of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin. It is such a strong symbol nationally that reference to Cyril and Methodius is even found in the preamble of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, where the Slovak nation identifies itself with the historical heritage of Great Moravia. This view is shared by the former Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico even today; he says: “At that time, 25 years ago, no lawmakers and authors of the Slovak Constitution doubted; we all knew about the significance of the arrival of St. Cyril and Methodius. And without any hesitation we included it in the preamble of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic”. The then Prime Minister Fico also preferred the holiday of St. Cyril and Methodius to all other holidays and important days of the Slovak Republic.

The story of interpretation and current discussions on the discovery of the oldest church at the Prague Castle is also interesting. According to the St. Wenceslas legend, this church was founded by Duke (Prince) Bořivoj (Přemyslid) in 882–884; having been baptised by Cyril and Methodius in Moravia, he took control of Prague Castle. When this religious structure was discovered between the 3rd and 4th courtyards in 1950–1951, Czech professionals started exerting a lot of pressure to have it interpreted as the first Bořivoj's church. The pressure was obviously based on the then societal demand for propping up historical bonds between early Bohemian Christianity and the eastern Cyril–Methodius tradition. As it turns out today, this interpretation is not entirely unambiguous and the structure was more probably a Přemyslid burial chapel (Maříková-Kubková personal communication), established before Bořivoj's baptism in Moravia (in 863), and is therefore rather associated with the influence of the imperial archdiocese in Regensburg. In fact, 14 Czech aristocrats were baptised in the Regensburg archdiocese as early as in 845, probably in an attempt to avoid a direct military intervention by the East Frankish Empire (*Regnum Francorum Orientalium*) to ensure proper Christianisation (Třeščík 1997). However, it was absolutely unthinkable to interpret the oldest religious monument in Prague in connection with political friendship with the German Empire shortly after liberation from German Nazism. This is a good place to remark that just after the war, members of the German nation were referred to with a small initial letter, quite in contradiction with the rules of Czech spelling but fully in line with the need to humiliate the defeated nation. Even Ivan Borkovskij, the discoverer of the religious building, himself seems (Maříková-Kubková, personal communication) to have doubted this interpretation and the dating of the archaeological find but in the end, to protect his own existence (he was Ukrainian by origin, threatened with deportation to the Soviet Union shortly after the war), he also endorsed the prevailing and politically acceptable interpretation.

In this context, it is peculiar to see how the cult of St. Cyril and Methodius legitimises the current identity of Czechs and Slovaks, too. At present this cult is definitely one of the main pillars of Moravian and, to some extent, also Bohemian Catholicism. But was it the same in the past? In the High Middle Ages, both missionaries were mentioned to legitimise the rule of the Přemyslid and Luxembourg dynasties but their importance for national legitimisation grew rapidly much later. During the 30 years' war in the 17th century, and later also in the 18th century, there were certain attempts to revive the Cyril and Methodius cult but without any greater social impact. The right moment to do so came in the 19th century, during the Czech national revival. It is interesting to watch the trend of dedicating churches to Cyril and Methodius in Bohemia and Moravia which started in the second half of the 19th century, along with emphasis-

ing pan-Slavism and East European Slavic togetherness; it climaxed between the 1890s and the beginning of the Second World War. On the contrary, in Slovakia there was a boom in Cyril and Methodius dedications later, between 1940 and 1944, at the time of the clerofascist Slovak State (Maříková-Kubková 2013, 6–8). The same cult was therefore used for international as well as national propaganda.

“Great Moravian” Svatopluk

The tradition of Cyril, Methodius and Great Moravia is used for propaganda even in current politics. The former Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico has started promoting his propagandistic interpretation of history, talking about “reasonable state historicism”, which should imbue the youth with patriotism (Lysý 2016). He arbitrarily decided to change generally used historical terms. Instead of Old Slavs as the population of Great Moravia he started using the expression “Old Slovaks”, and even promoted Duke (Prince) Svatopluk to their King (Kren 2008). Svatopluk, as a successful ruler, was also broadly appreciated by the fascist First Slovak Republic in 1939–1945 (Kováč 2005).

In 2010 the Slovak government installed a statue of Great Moravian Duke Svatopluk (Figure 7) with the text “Svatopluk—King of Old Slovaks” in the courtyard of the Bratislava Castle. Prime Minister Fico emphasised in his speech that Svatopluk had ruled even before the most famous rulers and patrons of Hungary and Bohemia: “Svatopluk was here long before St. Stephen and St. Wenceslas” (on Slovak—Hungarian animosity see Krekovič 2004). Only later, after objections by historians, the text under the statue was changed to: “To the loved son Svatopluk, a famous ruler”.

However, the territorial unit was rather an early medieval entity of Moravians, or “Great Moravians”, who were neither Bohemians nor Slovaks, but a population of the Carpathian Basin and the Middle Danube region speaking a Slavic language. These people cannot be categorised as “Bohemian” or “Slovak” Moravians. Slovaks started emerging after the demise of Great Moravia and the emergence of Hungary, when these “Great Moravians” found themselves in a new ethnic constellation and had to assert their identity in contrast to the non-Slavic Hungarians (see Steinhübel 2016). Ján Steinhübel also emphasises that only then did the need for a new group identity arise and they gradually became Slovaks.



Figure 7. Statue of Duke Svatopluk in front of the Bratislava Castle (photograph by J. Turek)

Post-processualism and Current Reflections

The political changes after 1989 opened Czechoslovak archaeology to the Western world and, just as TV viewers started learning about all the American series from the 1960s to the 1980s, Czech archaeology was all of a sudden exposed to the paradigms of processualism, naturally established in the West (New Archaeology appeared in the 1960s), and the post-processualism of the 1980s.

Post-processual archaeology means that, considering the inability to independently verify “historical truth” by experiments, archaeologists only limit themselves to interpretations within the most acceptable solution for them, formed by the thinking and the value system of the present; since

archaeologists themselves cannot be absolutely objective, their conclusions will be always influenced by personal prejudice (Trigger 1989). Such personal prejudice (not only negative) therefore necessarily influences the formulation of questions posed by archaeologists and their interpretation logically reflects their convictions.

In today's globalised world, archaeology is confronted on a daily basis with changes in public opinion, with the development of the society in a diverse geopolitical context, but also with a wide range of human rights issues. There is no doubt that archaeology, as a social science, cannot develop in isolation from social changes and, quite to the contrary, that it is destined to reflect on major societal issues of our time. Archaeology and its focus are therefore much more differentiated into individual interest areas that match the diverse flows of societal demand. This resulted in behavioural archaeology (studying human behaviour in different epochs of history), gender archaeology, feminist archaeology or queer archaeology.

It can be therefore concluded that although modern archaeology is profoundly affected by the current intellectual societal demand, archaeologists openly admit that their science is not apolitical and timeless. This awareness could hopefully help prevent its unfortunate political engagement and use for the propaganda of ideologies and regimes in the future.

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