



Obituary

Karel Valoch (15 April 1920 – 16 February 2013)

Ondřej Mlejnek

Karel Valoch (1920–2013) was one of the most renowned European experts in Palaeolithic archaeology. He was born in the Moravian capital of Brno in a bilingual Czech-German family on 15 April 1920. As a child he developed an interest in Pleistocene archaeology being surrounded by a number of amateur archaeologists, first and foremost his brother-in-law Franz Czupik. Along with his elder brother Hugo and his friend Vilém Gebauer, they conducted several amateur archaeological excavations and surface surveys as early as the 1930s.

After the Second World War, which he spent working in a sawmill in Velké Karlovice in eastern Moravia, a number of members of his family were expelled from Czechoslovakia as Germans. Karel Valoch became a member of a group of young amateur scientists interested in the Palaeolithic which was in contact with Karel Absolon, a retired professor and renowned Moravian scientist. The majority of the members of this group (*e.g.* the anthropologist Jan Jelínek, the palaeontologist Rudolf Musil and the archaeologist Bohuslav Klíma) later became world renowned scientists

and cooperated with Karel Valoch on his research on the Central European Pleistocene. Valoch began to work in the Diluvial Department of the Moravian Museum (later the Anthropos Institute) in 1952, where he remained until the end of his days.

Karel Valoch completed his dissertation devoted to the Moravian Magdalenian in 1960 and delivered lectures in Palaeolithic archaeology at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University from 1965 to 1986. Due to the Communist regime and the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Karel Valoch could not be appointed an associate professor prior to the 1990s.

During his long career Karel Valoch conducted numerous archaeological excavations in Moravia. Together with Rudolf Musil he documented all the open loess sections in the Brno and Vyškov areas in the 1950s. Archaeological excavations worthy of mention include the Szeletian site in Rozdrojovice, the Magdalenian occupation in Žitného Cave in the Moravian Karst, the excavation of the Pod hradem Cave, the Szeletian site in Neslovice, the Mesolithic settlement in Smolín,

Karel Valoch was granted the Prize of the City of Brno in 2011. Photo by Jan Čága, Moravian Museum.



the type site of the Bohunician technocomplex in Brno-Bohunice, the Szeletian site Vedrovice V, the Epigravettian site on Vídeňská Street in Brno or the Lower Palaeolithic site Stránská skála I in Brno-Slatina. He was also a member of a number of scientific societies and on the editorial boards of *L'Anthropologie* and *Antropologie* (Brno) journals. As a museum employee he prepared numerous exhibitions, such as the unique exhibition “The Oldest Art in Europe”, where original pieces of Palaeolithic Art from a number of European Institutions were presented.

His professional career is primarily connected with Kůlna Cave, which was excavated between 1961 and 1976. This excavation was the largest Palaeolithic excavation in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War and attracted the attention of an international scientific audience. Karel Valoch cooperated with specialists in all the fields of Pleistocene research, e.g. with the paleontologist Rudolf Musil, the anthropologist Jan Jelínek, the malakozoologist Vojen Ložek and a number of others. Karel Valoch was thus one of the first promoters of the modern interdisciplinary research in European archaeology. The collection of Micoquian hand axes or bone remains of Neanderthals, for example, rank among the most impressive finds of this excavation.

Karel Valoch was known for his wide knowledge of the Palaeolithic and also for the kindness with which he dealt with his colleagues and also with all amateurs interested in the Palaeolithic. When I visited the Anthropos Institute for the first time in 1998 as a high school student, I was introduced to him and he spent hours explaining all I wanted to know concerning the Moravian Palaeolithic. After this experience I decided to apply for university studies in archaeology. His remarkable personality will be missed not only by Moravian archaeologists, but also far beyond.

Selected publications

- 1953: Paleolitická stanice s křemennými nástroji v Rozdrojovicích u Brna, *Archeologické rozhledy* 5, 439–441, 568.
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- 1960: *Magdalénien na Moravě*. *Anthropos* 12, N. S. 4, Brno.
- 1962: Die Blattspitzenindustrie von Ořechov II bei Brno, *Anthropozoikum* 10 (1960), 35–47.
- 1963: Borky I, eine Freilandstation des Magdalénien in Brno-Maloměřice, *Acta Musei Moraviae, Sci. Soc.* 48, 5–30.
- 1965: Industrien des Szeletien im Raume des Kromauer Waldes in Südmähren, *Acta Musei Moraviae, sci. soc.* 50, 5–20.
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- 1976: Das entwickelte Aurignacien von Tvarožná bei Brno, *Acta Mus. Moraviae, Sci. soc.* LXI, 7–30.
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- 1979: *Paleolit středního Pomoraví*. Studie Muzea Kroměřížska '79, 22–35.
- 1982: Neue paläolithische Funde von Brno-Bohunice, *Acta Musei Moraviae, Sci. Soc.* 67, 31–48.
- 1983: Příspěvek k paleolitickému osídlení Prostějovska, *Acta Musei Moraviae, Sci. Soc.* 68, 23–44.
- 1984: Výzkum paleolitu ve Vedrovicích V (okr. Znojmo), *Acta Musei Moraviae, Sci. Soc.* 69, 5–22.
- 1987: The Early Palaeolithic Site Stránská skála I near Brno (Czechoslovakia). *Anthropologie* XXV/2, 125–142.
- 1988 (ed.): *Die Erforschung der Kůlna-Höhle 1961–1976*. Moravské muzeum v Brně, Brno.
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- 1990: Mittelpaläolithische Fundstellen in der Umgebung von Dolní Kounice in Südmähren, *Acta Musei Moraviae, Sci. Soc.* 75, 3–15.
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