

Pavel Dvořák

VENUS OF
MORAVANY

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Published by the RAK, Budmerice

This publication was funded by the Grant in Support of Cultural Activities

of the Trnava Self-governing Region

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Photographs by Jakub Dvořák, Balneological Museum in Piešťany

and author's archive

English translation by Eva Brejová, www.evabeva.com

Graphic design and typesetting: Garamond, s. r. o., Trnava

Printed by Edit Print, Trnava

ISBN 80-85501-31-7

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VENUS OF MORAVANY

AN ADVENTURE WITH A MYSTERIOUS
LADY



VYDAVATELSTVÍ O RAK

2006

A False Lady Affair

The Venus of Moravany cannot smile like Mona Lisa also because, a long long time ago somebody knocked her head off; in fact, she is even more mysterious. Her story is a drama, a detective story in its own right, not less interesting because we only have a torso and because it has no beginning and no end. It is merely a tangled ball of yarn pierced with a few clues and hints and it is not enough to solve the mystery. On the other hand, it is also true that the new clues emerge from time to time and this may not change in future. The numerous secrets surrounding this story and the ever growing gap in time mesmerize us and guarantee that the surprises will, perhaps, never end.

The Venus of Moravany is a figure of a nude woman carved from the mammoth tusk. A tiny, only seven and half centimetre tall, yet a dignified old lady – some twenty-five thousand years old – is famous appropriately to her age. I mentioned her in four of my books myself, published numeral articles on her (not always scientifically accurate), spoke about her on the radio, made a documentary film because she presents a fascinating subject with the scent of thousands of years and a peculiar, incomparable, romantic flavour.



In fact, the her story has one more, not quite so romantic, I dare say to the contrary, almost irrational side to it: it is a story imbued with politics, the common-place, disgusting politics

Then, politics may be worth mentioning, too. And so, let's recap the facts known from time immemorial

The most celebrated Slovak Lower Paleolithic archaeological site in Moravany nad Váhom has been known to us for at least two centuries. The scholarly records date back to the first half of the 19th century but we shall never find out when people actually took notice of the half-disintegrated tusks and skulls as big as a baby carriage in the vicinity of Moravany.

Rozina Motešická, the owner of the Moravany Chateau, can take credit for the first mention of the finds. In 1863 she sent the bone and antler tools, found in the local brick factory, to the Imperial Geological Institute in Vienna. She addressed the Director Franz von Hauer directly, which was not by no means a mere coincidence,

because Franz von Hauer was a graduate of the Academy of Mining and Forestry in Banská Štiavnica who, as a head of a surveying expedition pioneered publication of the first geological map of Slovakia in 1869; or to be more precise, the map of ‘northern Hungary’ constituting the sheet No. 3 of the first (and the oldest) geological map of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Allegedly, the mammoths of Moravany were known as early as the 18th century. Their bones had been used until the early 20th century in preparation of remedies to reduce fever.

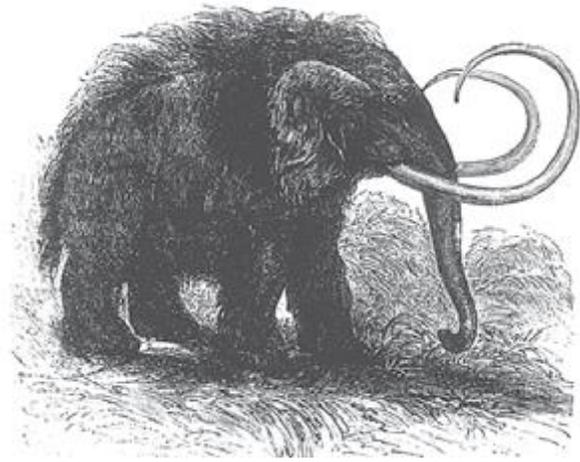
The re-discovery of the Moravany Paleolithic is attributed to the administrator of the Piešťany Spa, Václav Vlk. In 1931 he collected a substantial amount of Paleolithic material from the Lopata river plateau, located some 30 meters above existing bed of the Váh River, which proved that not only mammoth lived in in Moravany nad Váhom but also its hunters.

And they should be described in more detail.

First of all, they were humans just like us. The prominent French scholar Henri de Lumley said: “If you were on subway and a guy from Crô-Magnon (the name of a French rock shelter with archaeological site which gave the new humans this frequently used name – the Cro-Magnon men), you would hardly notice him. Should, however, a Neanderthal man stand next to you, you would, most likely, have a good look...”

They were humans like us, only savages; hunters and gatherers of anything edible. Definitely savages whose skills, courage, and culture (yes, the word ‘culture’ is quite in place) leave us in awe. After all, the Venus of Moravany is a living proof.

They did not walk the same landscape as we do today; everything was different, corresponding to the Ice Age. The vast, inhospitable tundra, frozen land covered in moss and lichen, the shrubs and twisted solitary trees; no fields, no forests, not even the rivers as we know them now. In short summers the icebergs thawed, their water raging and pouring and flowing wherever it pleased. In winter rivers were non-existent – all water was stopped and covered in thick ice. There wasn’t a drinking place and yet – a miracle near Piešťany: 80°C thermal water melted ice even in the severest frost so that drinking places on the Váh River were always accessible, the local specialty which made the history - anywhere else only snow and ice (at least under ground because ground did not thaw even in the hottest summer as in Siberia or Alaska) – and here warm, flowing



*Mammoth, the hero of our story,
as imagined by the 19th century.*

water allured animals from wide and far and with it hand in hand also hunters.

The king of the Ice Age, mammoth, is shrouded in legend which will never die partially also because it came to existence under curious circumstances. In Siberia, in the climate of permafrost and snow, frozen mammoth have preserved with some flesh, skin, hair, some with the blood in their veins, full bowels and stomach, and tusks especially, perfectly preserved. The perfect goods. Near to fresh and, therefore, sought after by specialized prospectors and sold as ivory by mammoth tusk dealers. It was so convincing that some people believed mammoth had survived in some places and kept looking for a long lost mammoth herd. And because their bones stuck out of the ice, locals (for example, the Yakuts) believed that they had lived underground like hedgehogs: had they crawled out, the Sun would kill them and that was the reason for constant finding

their carcasses. In the essence, they feared the mammoth shrouded in countless myths; they believed they meant bad luck. That complicated the work of the scholars who were looking for the preserved mammoth bodies.

It took people long to reconstruct the real appearance of mammoth. We know today that they reached heights in the region of three and a half meters (approximately same as the African elephant) or more (the mammoth bones unearthed in Brno, Moravia, point at the height of nearly four and a half meters) and they often weighted as many as six to seven tons. Their heads bore two huge, some weighing over a metric cent and their bodies were protected by a thick skin covered in ginger fur. Every catch offered mounds of suet and meat, square meters of fur, cents of tusks and bones; the entrails, marrow, and even contents of the bowels were a delicacy. Mammoth were herbivores whose bodies were the pantries filled with various plants.

Naturally, seen through contemporary eyes, to hunt down an animal of such proportions merely with stone and bone tools seems impossible and this fact alone contributed to the legend which has surrounded the ancient hunters to this day. No wonder that the discovery of Václav Vlk caught the attention of several archaeologists.

Perhaps also the close proximity of the attractive spa of Piešťany contributed to the fact that in several years afterwards the village of Moravany was visited by a fleet of scientific elite: Jiří Neustupný, Jaroslav Petrbok, Josef Škutil. Each of them found something – the Paleolithic objects were simply everywhere. Josef Škutil interpreted Moravany as a vast campground, a diluvial town, thus, placing them next to Dolní Věstonice, famous from the excavations of Karel Absolon.

Although, the assumption would not hold water - more accurate findings were absent. The scientists combed the banks of the Váh River, visited local collectors, and dug test pits but real archaeological survey, i.e. the first consistent Paleolithic research in Slovakia, was conducted in Moravany nad Váhom as late as 1941 and 1943.

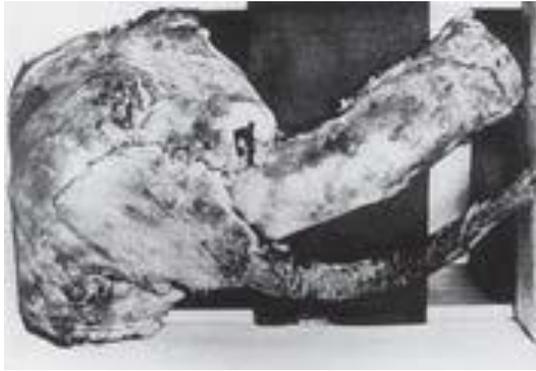
It was conducted by the German archaeologist Lothar Zotz, since 1939 a professor at the German University in Prague. The Paleolithic in Czechoslovakia had been his main interest before WW2 when, as an associate professor of the Wroclaw (Breslau) university met Karel Absolon and visited him in Dolní Věstonice. He had studied his survey but Moravany nad Váhom somehow grew on him.



A small gallery of mammoth. As rendered by Ľudovít Fulla.

From 1935 on he visited Piešťany periodically, accompanied by Václav Vlk. He visited excavation sites, carried out several small-scale digs and reported on them before WW2. In 1937 he studied a rather small Paleolithic collection of the Piešťany museum; nearly everything found in Moravany before foundation of the museum in Piešťany, was held by the founders in their private collections, lost, given away, or sold. The Moravany site was, basically, a domain of private collectors and it has remained so to this day. Especially the spa guests got their money's worth. And it was not just anything; according to Zotz's testimony "flints were lifted like potatoes and sold to the outside world".

The earlier mentioned Václav Vlk helped Zotz considerably. He was an interesting man; as a curator he had his share in development of the town of Piešťany. He closely co-operated with the Winter family whose members had a on lease of the Piešťany for fifty years during which time they raised its status to international level.



The carcass preserved by Siberian permafrost

It was his idea to build thermal ponds and a renowned park - the home to tropical lotus flower *Victoria Regia*, construction of a golf course, miniature zoological garden... but in our story the most important of all of them is the Balneological Museum which he founded together with Imrich Winter in 1933. Vlk's private collection became the basis of the museum's collection. And it did not contain Paleolithic finds only; Václav Vlk unearthed, for example, a Slavic burial ground in Borovce which has still been the object of survey, and not less famous excavation site in Veselé. He saved the memorabilia related to General Milan Rastislav Štefánik as well as to the 1848 –1849 revolution. His merits were not enough to protect him (as a strict and consistent steward of national heritage he must have had many enemies). After creation of the independent Slovak Republic in 1939 he was expelled to the Protectorate of Bohemia. Many other Czech scientists were shut out of Slovakia; that opened the door of opportunity for the earlier mentioned Lothar Zotz. The political events played in his favour but, to be honest, he was not carried by the political wave passively. To the contrary.

Following the Nazi occupation of the Protectorate of Bohemia, Lothar Zotz was actively involved in building a new image of the oldest Czech history – he founded the magazine “*Altböhmen und Altmähren*” (The Old Bohemia and Moravia) and in his book “*Von Mammutjägern zu den Wikingern*” (From Mammoth Hunters to Vikings) he looked for Germanic people as early as in Ice Age. His history corresponded to the new order in Europe; he was proving that both Bohemia and Moravia had been German territories since subordinated to this objective. The Slavic people were nearly non-existent according to it.

Zotz was a prominent personality. When he decided to excavate the site in Moravany, located in the territory of another state, the Slovak Republic Prime Minister (and the chancellor of the Slovak University) Vojtech Tuka was contacted by the Reich Leader Heinrich Himmler himself. Himmler was not only the SS leader but also held a Doctor of Humane Letters (*honoris causa*) degree in archaeology and was an Honorary President of the “*Ahnenerbe*” (The Ancestral Heritage) society established to prove that the country of origin of the Germans covered entire Europe. Tuka was thrilled by Himmler’s request; in his response he asked for ‘Himmler’s spade’ and proactively proposed to create in Slovakia a common Slovak-German institute of early history.

Lothar Zotz dug in Moravany twice: in 1941 and 1943, with brilliant results. In Lopata and Žákovská sites he discovered remnants of dwellings. He presented the small huts, approximately two and a half meter long and barely one and a half meter wide, as the first discovery of Paleolithic dwelling objects in Central Europe and as a proof that the “Slovak” mammoth hunters had tendency stay in one location for an extended period of time and build diluvial settlements. This was not an original hypothesis; Karel Absolon said the same of Dolní Věstonice and J. Škutil of Piešťany much earlier, but Zotz’s claim was state-forming because an ideologist and doyen of German archaeology, Gustáv Kossina, presented an opinion that people who gain something rarely abandon it unless they have to, i.e. any place where Germanic finds were unearthed should, therefore, be Germanic and German.

Zotz’s test pits yielded also stone tools, fire hearths, Ice Age animal bones (young mammoth, sable, cave bears, polar fox, horse, rabbit, lion, and birds).

A unique fragment of an animal head engraved in marlite, and even more precious fragment of a female figure in clay (looking like *mons veneris*, the Mound of Venus), the oldest evidence of sculptural art in the territory of Slovakia at that time and also a proof that the mammoth hunters of Moravany knew the secret of making pottery.



The first lady of our prehistory.

The pinnacle of his success was excavation of a stone industry workshop – a flaking station. The manufactures tools included magnificent large, wide blades, hide scrapers, and especially, the Paleolithic masterpiece – leaf-like tips. As many as 70 finished and some 80 unfinished or defective blades represented the most grandiose discovery of leaf-shaped blades in Central Europe. The workshop displays entire manufacturing process from pebbles up to the perfect, two to eight centimetres long blades, some of them almost as thin as a paper. In one of the clusters left behind by the toolmakers was also found a stone ‘stool’ used by a prehistoric craftsman for sitting ,as well as stone anvils and hammer-stones.

In other words, an archaeologist’s El Dorado.

Zotz said for a newspaper article that the Moravany site was one of the largest Paleolithic sites in Central and South-Eastern Europe; he also spoke of the oldest documented use of bow and arrow and

stated that the Moravany workshop, abandoned suddenly, must have disappear due to a disaster, such as a sudden wave of loess winds or a raid of enemy.

That was not an original idea either. Shortly before that the in Kostenki, Ukraine, archaeologists unearthed pits in the bottom of the dwellings of mammoth hunters, adjusted to serve specifically as custodians of precious objects, containing the idols in form of women, mammoth, cave bear and lion and other animals, as well as decorative objects made of animal teeth (mainly, polar fox), countless flint tips, and some fine tips. They were considered small treasure boxes. And they were full!! What was the point in depositing their treasures in these safe deposit boxes and let them rest there for thousands of years? There is only one possible explanation: the people who hid their treasures in the pits were never given an opportunity to come back to dig them out and reuse. Somebody must have prevented them and that ‘somebody’ threw several female idols all over the place, perhaps even stumped them up. The chief archaeologist Piotr Pavlovic Jefimenko, therefore, assumed that an unknown drama happened in Kostenki: the hunters and their families left their homes under the circumstances which did not allow them to take along even the most precious property.



A perfect reconstruction. The Antropos Museum, Brno.

Perhaps, they fled from an enemy who took possession of their dwellings and, in order to eliminate the guardian deities of the Kostenki encampment, they smashed the female, Venus figures.

Zotz's surveys made him a celebrity scholar; in those days the political leaders knew how to appreciate survey. (Unfortunately, they abandoned this good traditions). The excavation site was visited by Jozef Tiso, President of the Slovak Republic himself, Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka, and others. And Zotz was well prepared for their visits; Ernest Opluštil (a new secretary of the Piešťany Museum Society after Vlk's departure) recollected that he had seen with his own eyes how Zotz place in the pits the objects from the Museum collections. The evil tongues were even saying that he not only enhanced the ground plan of alleged huts, but literally created them. He ordered to place in the pit a barn gate and sink it in water. The covered spot was then easily visible in the terrains but it had little to do with a dwelling of mammoth hunters.

The post-war revision research confirmed decidedly that Zotz intentionally ‘enhanced’ the floor-plan of the alleged dwelling. Perhaps he wanted to stress the significance and uniqueness of the finds in Moravany sites in order to avoid fighting on the front; all in vain.

We must stress that Zotz’s hoaxes (which may speak of his sense of humour and make him a more likable person), good for impressing the officials in high places, do not diminish the importance of his finds. The reputation of Moravany as the ‘Slovak Věstonice’ was growing quite rightfully; as we have said earlier and will further prove, the Moravany site was known worldwide at the time. The research was extensive but also considerably tragic for the discipline. Unearthed objects disappeared... Zotz ordered all finds transferred to the German University in Prague and he was sent to front line shortly afterwards. The Slovak government requested returning of the finds but Germans refused; everything had to be conserved, sketched, photographed, casts made and Slovaks were not competent enough to do so. Under the circumstances the conditions are not right, but after the war a joint museum would be built in Moravany and then the finds will be returned where they belong.

But the war ended differently than Himmler envisioned and the finds disappeared for good. Zotz later admitted that he took some of the



Lothar Zotz in Moravany

nicest spear tips to Germany but anything else was left in Prague. Who knows what really happened. Almost nothing was found in Prague, only torsos of the great whole. Nobody was after Zotz anyway - people had different problems. And he had problems with clearing his name as a Nazi supporter (he was seeking an Erlangen university professorship). Interestingly, a testimonial from Prague to his honest character and to not being a pro-Nazi helped him to win the post. It is difficult to come to a conclusion after all these years but one thing is certain: response of Czechoslovakia was negative. Petrbock labelled the testimonial 'a grand lie', Absolon 'a treason', and Škutil was consternated as well, but to no avail. Shortly afterwards the Iron Curtain was dropped and Zotz, who won the Erlangen professorship, was beyond reach.

After WW2 the excavations in Moravany nad Váhom were headed by František Prošek, who shed a new light into the subject: it turned out that Zotz did not unearth huts but now unidentifiable remains of the parts of dwellings, that a diluvial town never existed along the



Mammoth from Zotz's book

Váh River banks but a system of tens of encampments from different periods.

It was not about Zotz's lies - the discipline simply evolved quickly. The Slovak archaeology went through its golden age. The new finds by far exceeded what was considered sensational in Zotz's times. The real dwellings of mammoth hunters were unearthed in Barča near Košice; the head of the survey, Ladislav Bánesz interpreted them quite differently from the ones in Moravany. They were smaller in size, but a few of them were the long houses as long as 15-18 meters long and 3-4 meters wide. One of them was shaped as a cross with the shorter bars 14 meters long, containing the piles of stone debris - the traces of tool manufacture, i.e. something reminiscent of Paleolithic manufacture. And it was not alone. In a nearby Seňa, where an unknown craftsman worked in the open-air, the archaeologists traced him as he moved from one place to another leaving behind the large clusters of stone debris. It is curious that in Seňa they only made roughly flaked obsidian semi-products (preforms); the fine touches were done at an unknown place so far.

In Tibava - a site almost a contemporary of the Seňa site – archaeologists discovered stone flakes, neatly sorted out into three piles: the first containing obsidian, second containing flint, and the third with a variety of rocks. The huge storage-pits were able to contain by far more food than could have been consumed even by the largest, or a distinct grouping of the tools for curing hide (supporting the existence of a prehistoric tannery) could be another evidence of specialized manufacture, perhaps the exchange of commodities.

Slovakia can pride on its own mammoth hunter or, a ‘mammoth hunteress’, respectively. Regretfully, she was not discovered in an archaeological dig but by coincidence; in 1990 Ladislav Katona , an excavator operator, found a human skull in Moča location near Komárno. He took the curiosity home with him and after a longer time showed it to Štefan Mészáros, an amateur palaeontologist, who immediately understood that he held something very exceptional in his hands. The skull found its way to Dr. Alena Šefčáková from the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava. The site features and structures were destroyed, therefore, the age of the skull could be determined only by a radiometric dating method. A small bone sample was sent to



Oxford, England, and the tests determined that it was approximately 11,250 years old. The unknown woman lived at the end of the Ice Age. The animals, such as mammoth, woolly rhinoceros and others, had moved up north at that time, though it is not impossible that they could be found here and there in our region. For example, the mammoth bones found in Moravia are by estimate some 12 thousand years old. The ground was covered with steppe, characteristic of thin birch, willow, and pine tree woods inhabited - besides nearly extinct sable and horse - also by the wild ox, extinct in the 17th century, as well as now rare European moose and European bison, and the animals similar to surviving deer, roebuck, etc.

The tip found in Banka pri Piešťanoch, set in wood by a collector.

The age of the anonymous female, nicknamed after the place of discovery, was determined only roughly, as 35 to 55 years. The anthropologists noticed her half-worn teeth, a phenomenon

common in Inuit women who use them to soften skin of the hunted prey.

Everything said so far is meant to contribute to better understanding of complexity of the Venus of Moravany issues which are stuck, with one foot at least, in the old passions and grudges. Their impartial deciphering and assessment is probably impossible. and because of that they are tackled controversially. The disappearance and reappearance of the Venus of Moravany transcended to category of myths which have several firm points.

The first bird making spring - a big event, was an article of Juraj Bárta published in 'Archeologické rozhľady' (Archaeological Review) in 1959: „....*even more joyful is the latest news of the University of Erlangen professor Lothar Zotz who, in his letter dated October 15, 1958, informed a desk-officer that during WW2 he procured a statuette of Venus carved from the fossilized mammoth bone. It was exposed by deep ploughing in Moravany nad Váhom in 1937/1938, when also Paleolithic artifacts were lifted. Professor Zotz sent the statuette to Henri Breuil in Paris for study via professor Baudet. In order to evaluate this precious find from point of view of art history in*

Slovakia, we would appreciate if we could see professor Zotz's scholarly paper regarding the Venus of Moravany as soon as possible."

In his article Juraj Barta does not mention how he started his correspondence regarding the Venus of Moravany, but Zotz reports on the figure as early as 1951 in his book *'Altsteinzeitkunde Mitteleuropas'*

(Paleolithic in Central Europe). It was only a brief note but an interesting one: it was believed that the Venus of Moravany is a forgery.

And he never dismissed this possibility.

At least that is what he used to say. He promised to return the Venus to Slovakia once he would solve the riddle of its authenticity. That was reason why he had sent it to Paris to the renowned scholar L'abbé Breuil (for the white collar nicknamed 'the Pope of Paleolithic Prehistory'). In 1953 he carefully scrutinized the Venus of Moravany but did not come to the definite conclusion. He only expressed the probability that it is an authentic Paleolithic idol, stressing the opinion by exhibiting



L'abbé Breuil



Karel Absolon

Venus in the Paris Museum of Man. He came up with a curious hypothesis: somebody unknown chiselled Venus again. In his opinion, it happened after she lost her head and arms, probably not earlier than Neolith. It must have been the case because, unlike any other Paleolithic idol, the Venus of Moravany has a perfectly smooth surface and, in addition, two tones. She was given all that by the second treatment. It is hard to say. In any case, Zotz got the idol back without a final judgement. Allegedly, refusing to issue a written opinion, L'abbé Henri Breuil said specifically that he had enough experience with con artists in this part of Europe.

Don't be surprised - the prehistoric artifacts have long been the object of forgery, and Zotz could not provide the very basic information, especially, when, where, and who found the Venus of Moravany. He based his claim on hearsay that a farmer ploughed it out sometime between 1937 and 1938. Zotz assumed that it comes from Podkovic location because Paleolithic artifacts were lifted from the ground like potatoes there. Zotz also failed to report how he procured Venus, only

that he learnt of the original owner, a Sudetenland factory owner and a Piešťany Spa guest only much later.

Breuil, however, was cautious as because of a very concrete experience - the affair of the second Venus of Dolní Věstonice. The first Venus of Dolní Věstonice is renowned, the second Venus of Věstonice practically fell into oblivion. And both, the glory and oblivion, are the children of Karel Absolon, as it seems, at the expense of the Venus of Moravany. And so, it will be quite reasonable to shift our attention to south Moravia for a moment.

In 1923 a mammoth idol in burnt clay was found in Dolní Věstonice, a village at the foot of Pavlovské Hills. The antique collectors assumed that their moment had come. Only Karel Absolon learnt of the find, too. He was aware of the possible damages to the sites where several amateur archaeologists carry out uncoordinated survey and where the artifacts end up in private collections, therefore, he attempted to push the lay archaeologists out of the most precious locations. In most cases he managed; he held a title of professor, position of a museum custodian, and he was greatly respected, but it all came with a big dose of hatred. From time to time the public opinion was against him (and this fact plays an important role in our story).

Nevertheless, to push these uninvited intruders out of the excavation site was not enough; it was necessary to professionally examine it. And there was yet another stumbling block. Only one professionally trained archaeologist, a Paleolithic specialist, worked in entire Moravia, Josef Škutil, and he did not participate at field work. Absolon himself began to dig in Dolní Věstonice, only he was not an archaeologist, but a geographer and biologist, and it took him a long time to be recognized, to become accepted as a prominent specialist in ‘paleoethnography’, as he called his lectures in archaeology at the Prague University.

As soon as he surveyed the terrain in Dolní Věstonice in the presence of an expert commission, he asked authorities for immediate ban on private digs and in 1924 commenced work. In the first weeks of survey he unearthed so many artifacts that he



A long drop from mammoth bone, perfectly preserved by frost.

The Siberian mammoth tusks are a much sought after commodity at collector's antique shows.

could establish a permanent archaeological expedition to Dolní Věstonice, the only one in entire Czechoslovakia, and one of the

most extensive and methodologically best managed surveys in contemporary Europe. In the same year he found nearly nine and a half thousand stone tools, a large suite of bone tools, miscellaneous decorative objects, miniature statuettes, and the bones enough to fill fifteen large crates.

Dolní Věstonice became the talk of the day. And Absolon had the talent to attract publicity. He charged for his lectures and the house was full anyway. Absolon's slightly pathetic manner of speech enthralled the audience.

The highlight of Absolon's life came in 1925, when a burnt clay female figure appeared in the test pit - the famous Venus of Dolní Věstonice. His ardent speech appealed to Moravian patriotism. "Things as these lay under ground here. Can you imagine how much would Americans pay for them?! A million dollars..." He was pressed to make similar statements also as a result of uncertain status of archaeology. In 1925 alone, when he wanted to continue excavating in Dolní Věstonice, he had to pay 40,000 Crowns from his own pocket. He reported this fact in his study.

But a million is a million. In 1929 a rumour had spread that a farmer found another, this time a bone, Venus. Initially it was merely a fable, one of those quickly surfacing and disappearing,

but only until a merry company started to drink in a wine cellar of the neighbouring Horní Věstonice. And Emanuel Dania, the conservator of the Moravian Museum, Absolon's right hand and, by coincidence, a man who spotted the Venus of Věstonice in the test pit as first, was not missing either. When the entertainment was at its best, one of the present, a tenant from the Horní Věstonice mill, a German Franz Müllender exclaimed that he was a rich man.

He said he had a million Crowns.

He did attract attention but the present people did not believe him; they thought it was just babbling of a drunk man. The provoked Müllender left in order to quickly return with a rather big female statuette carved from a mammoth tusk.

Dania was an experienced expert and it did not escape his attention that the statuette bears all the attributes of a prehistoric artefact: it is made from same material as excavated objects and, in addition, the story about its origin seemed plausible. Supposedly, the statuette was found by his father when digging a well. The next day Dania informed Absolon and the statuette was officially seized. It travelled to the Museum. A team of

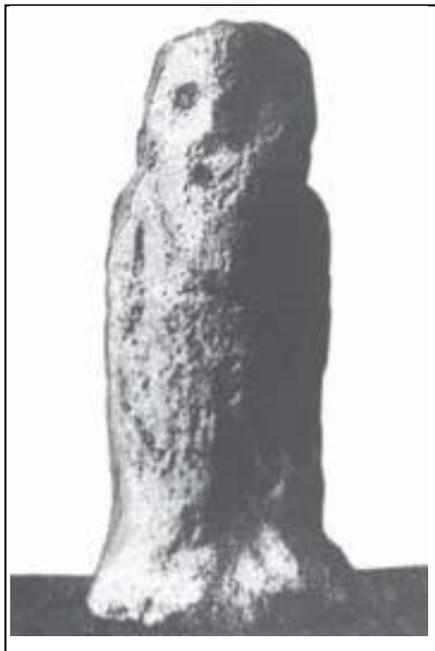
experts gathered around it but concluded immediately that it was “a poor counterfeit carved at a later time with ill intentions”.

And that was the right moment for Absolon’s adversaries. They launched a campaign for recognition of authenticity of the newly discovered Venus. They won the support of several newspapers which sounded alarm bells. *Müllender has a buyer somewhere abroad. Who will take responsibility if he takes Venus across borders and it turns out that Absolon was wrong? Can be Absolon trusted? Isn’t he doing everything in his power to maintain the status quo - a single - his Venus?* He was under a strong anti-Absolon pressure; newspapers published caricatures of Absolon and derogatory poems about him.

In this situation, the defenders of authenticity of the second Venus of Věstonice, in the meantime returned to her owner, set out to journey to introduce the figure to the world and then something incredible happened: more than ten internationally renowned scholars, Henri Breuil included, confirmed its authenticity!

The anti-Absolon opposition triumphed. And a third statuette appeared. The painter Škrdlík from Brno said that the family treasures include a mammoth bone figure, a unique piece as it depicts a male Apollo.

One of the decisive arguments of the French, Spanish, and German scholars in justifying the authenticity of the Venus was



that the mammoth bone was genuine. The fossilized mammoth bone is so fragile that it cannot be used for carving because it would fall apart. The pro-Absolon camp came up with an idea. A brilliant carver Josef Rulíšek worked in the Brno museum. (He carved a collection of wooden mushrooms, indistinguishable from real ones, and admired to this date).

Škrdlík's 'petrified snowman' has disappeared a long time ago. Only a smudged photograph of a comical figure survived.

He was given a mammoth tusk from Dolní Věstonice and he carved out of it two tiny birds. And since the work looked good, he created also two replicas: the Venus of Menton and the Venus of Věstonice. They were indistinguishable from the originals. When they presented them at a Nurnberg congress shortly afterwards, it was a sensation. And a lot of mockery. The supporters of authenticity backed up and even some of the experts who authenticated it, change their opinion).

The affair ended in huge fiasco. One of the New York museums, which was offered the Venus of Věstonice for the astronomical

price of two million dollars, announced that it was still willing to buy the Venus - for three hundred dollars, and only because of the curious circumstances. Škrdlík was sentenced to a prison term and his 'Apollo' was nicknamed 'The Snowman'.

Absolon triumphed, but mainly by brilliant discoveries. In the decades following WW2, the digs in Dolní Věstonice and neighbouring Pavlov were headed by Bohuslav Klíma. The archaeologists unearthed thousands of stone and bone tools, human bones, graves. Also a skull of a lioness killed, most probably, by man, tens of other idols, a little clay head of a horse, rhinoceros, figure of a young mammoth, lionesses, dozens of Venuses, a unique whistle from sable digits which could be played even after millennia. Another sensation was a tally stick - a piece of wolf's bone marked with notches arranged into a system which can be still understood, perhaps, the oldest written record in the world; Paleolithic Mona Lisa (a sculptural portrait of a woman with carefully coiffed hair and a visibly deformed face). And even the first map with a representation of the settlement of mammoth hunters which was successfully found in the landscape and interpreted.

We could name finds endlessly and it might be even useful because on comparison of the Moravany sites and those of Moravia one can see what a chance Slovakia missed by not having its her own Absolon (or Klíma) and , thus, losing a chapter of its history, because Moravany nad Váhom would, very likely, be able to complete it.

But let's get back to our own story.

Shortly before return of the Venus of Moravany, expected in a tense atmosphere, a sad event happened: professor Zotz suddenly died. His assistant and colleague, Gisela Freund, however, decided to deliver on Zotz's promise and personally delivered the Venus of Moravany together with several studies (later printed in the journal '*Slovenská archeológia*' (Slovak Archaeology) to the Archaeological Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Nitra.

The first article was written by Freund herself and she write in it, besides other, the following:

“It is especially tragic that Zotz did not live to see the results of the analyses he attempted to speed up while on his sickbed. And it is tragic that destiny didn't allow him to return the statuette to the country of origin in the spring of 1967 and, thus, materialize a plan he concocted while the statuette was still with Henri Breuil in Paris.”

The second Zotz's study felt like a message from the world beyond.

“We still doubt, hesitate to recognize the figure, which had such a whimsical fate in our hands, a Paleolithic one. It does not correspond to the finds from mammoth bone, often seen by the author during his excavations in Slovakia.”

And in other place:

“If we found the courage to present the Venus to experts three decades after its

alleged finding; we are not doing so without any consideration. We still doubt, hesitate to recognize the figure, which had such a

whimsical fate in our hands, a Paleolithic one because the doubts about the material, about its fossilization and, therefore, about her old age, are linked to uncertain circumstances. As much as her surprising stylistic authenticity.”

Everything was to be decided by an expertise of a natural scientist (its author was biologist and palaeontologist Florian Heller) but Zotz did not live to see the result. It is shame,



Second Venus of Věstonice.

This lady is a fake.



A consultant for the television documentary, a young archaeologist Jozef Hromada, died tragically soon afterwards.

because the result was unequivocal:

“The figure of the Venus of Moravany was made from mammoth bone which has undergone a considerable process of aging. It is mineralized and, thus, knapping is impossible. Therefore, it was made in a remote past, decidedly not in modern history. Under these circumstances, suspicion of being a counterfeit is without any substantiation. The Venus of Moravany embodies a genuine artwork from Lower Paleolithic.”

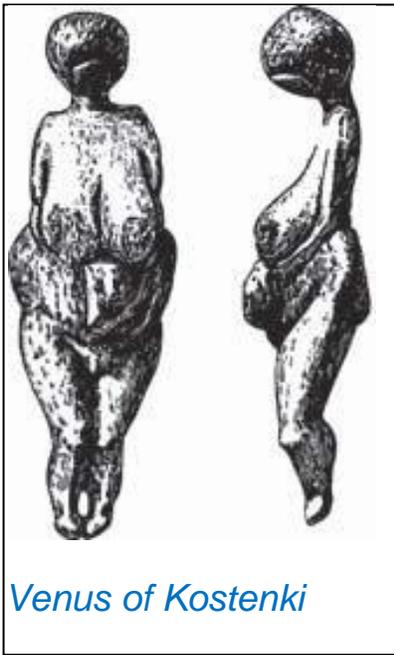
The circumstances of the find have remained unclear and they mesmerized the workers of the Balneological Museum in Piešťany and other regional scholars.

First of all, the name of the finder was uncertain. Two finders were mentioned: Karol Boliešik and Štefan Hullman-Petrech. Mr. Radošinský, the author of the article *‘Who ploughed out the Venus of Moravany?’* writes that a retired Moravany man Štefan Noška claims that his paternal grandfather Štefan Hullman-Petrech ploughed out the Venus in 1925 in the location of Podkovicica.

He kept it in a cupboard together with flints and pottery shards. Later he donated her to a German guest, Edwin Beyreuth, who took farmer's pictures and sent them to him. One of them contains a greeting and the date September 6, 1925.

Róbert Bača, Director of the Balneological Museum, tried to find out more. He studied various records and books of the Spa guests which list some 250 thousand names. He found out a strange thing: none of them mentions Edwin Beyreuth. Štefan Hullman-Petrech died as early as 1930 and, according to Zotz, the statuette was not found until 1937.

When searching in the Spa guest books, Róbert Bača made a significant discovery; he has, very likely, disclosed the identity of a mysterious Sudetenland factory owner, the original owner of the Venus of Moravany. According to the guest book records, Zotz checked in the sanatorium 'Cyril' on December 27, 1937. He then met Bernhard German, a businessman from Arnau (today Hostinné, district Trutnov, in the Czech Republic) who, during his stay in Piešťany Spa bought some antiques. It turned out that this unknown, mysterious man was, in fact, a



Venus of Kostenki

Polish József Gorczinski. When Germans invaded the town of Trutnov on October 10, 1938, he Arianized the paper mill of a Jewish owner Karol Miška. He wasn't exactly a beginner. He worked as a director of the paper factory Eichmann. After occupation of Sudetenland he Germanized his name, which came down to us in an interesting way. Long after the war

the paper mill in Hostinné was called (and may be called even today) 'Germanka'. Germann demonstrated his political outlooks when in 1943 donated the paper mill to NSDA; the employees were shareholders and he remained its Managing Director. In 1945, shortly before liberation of Trutnov by the Red Army, Germann and his wife committed suicide.

Germann's profession and political conviction suggest why his name did not appear in the spa guest logs. At that time, the Chateau of Moravany nad Váhom belonged to Count Alfréd Zedtwitz. The Zedtwitz family had owned the Chateau and the vast forests around it for some 70 years. In the twentieth century

the forests served two factories: the first produced paper, parquetry, rulers, match boxes and other packaging materials. The second, chemical factory, produced vinegar and essences (and for some time after WW1). The lumber was hauled by a narrow-gauge forest railroad with wagons pulled by horses. The Zedtwitz family had some property also in Sudetenland; they might have known Germann from there. The lumber must have helped in business contacts, more so that they both professed Nazi ideology. The older citizens of Piešťany are said to remember German children marching to the sound of drums and pipes, often hosted by Alfréd Zedtwitz in the Moravany Chateau.

And here we could end our story. But in the above mentioned article Zotz provided a sensational information: in location Lopata he excavated a thirty-to-forty centimetres long Venus; he did not examine it closely but conserved it in a clay block with a plaster and sent to Prague together with other artifacts.

Nobody has seen it ever since.

It is strange that all artifacts, excavated during the WW2 digs, vanished. Even Zotz's field records returned to Slovakia in a manner one could hardly anticipate. They survived in Himmler's archive, confiscated by Americans after the war who copied

and after long years sent back to Europe. In one of his reports, Zotz wrote quite clearly:

“It is possible that a larger piece of a carved mammoth tusk will fetch a surprise during conservation....”

We have been waiting for this surprise to this day.

And so, we have an extra mystery here: Where to vanished the second Venus of Moravany once it failed to prove the antiquity of the culture of German race?

Is it well hidden somewhere, forgotten, or destroyed?

Pavel Dvořák, “The Track of the Long Past” 1 (Slovakia in Pre-History), *An Affair of a Mysterious Lady*.