

The Perspectives of the Archaeological Knowledge of the American Military Activities during World War II¹

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Introduction – Archaeology of the Conflicts in 20th Century

For a long time, the archaeology dealt with the research of the prehistoric and middle age period in the first place. The interest of the later periods increased in the second half of the 20th century, when it was focused on the key historical events. Above all the important war conflicts, e.g. Thirty Years' War, Seven Years' War, the Napoleonic Wars or the conflicts among French, English and native Americans in North America, caught the interests of the archaeologists. Also the questions of the quick economic development, mainly the relics of the Industrial Revolution or the colonization of America, Africa or Asia, became also significant. The presence have attracted the interest of the archaeologists, who have been trying to understand of the nowadays people behaviour using the archaeological methods (observing the trash and consumption), since the end of the last century.

The era of the World War I is considered to be the important event with a great impact on the course of the following years. The professional archaeologists from France and Belgium came into contact with the relics from the years 1914–1918 during the ordinary salvage researches of the monuments of the earlier period, they documented these relics and started to find out that

¹ The article represents a result of the research of the project SGS-2013-042 (*Perspektivy výzkumu přítomnosti americké armády v západních Čechách v roce 1945 I*) of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.

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they gained the information, which were not known and also not detectable out of other sources, because they could be identify only using the archaeological methods. Mainly, it was the mapping of the defensive fighting position and the location of the battles. Hundreds meters of the filled up lines of the defensive fighting position were revealed, where the dozens of the artefacts of many sorts, e.g. little personal things, the parts of weapons and armours, unexploded ammunition, were found. Also the places, which were completely destroyed by an artillery attack and therefore there were only craters on these locations, were documented. Dozens of graves were uncovered – the individual ones and the mass graves as well, where a lot killed soldiers of both sides were found. The dead soldiers were in some cases identified and their bodies could be buried under their names. Starting the half of the 1990s, the conferences on this topic were organized and also the specialized departments were created.² Today the archaeology of the World War I is fully established discipline.

Described success of course had a positive impact on archaeological research of the World War II. The amateurs have studied the various aspects of the topic for a long time and their activities led to the topic the professional researchers as well. Studying of two themes, the air war and the fortifications, while the archaeological methods were used, have had a very long tradition. The beginnings of these activities can be found at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s in the UK. The amateur groups charted the events of the air war from 1939 to 1945 carried out the first excavation of the crashed aircraft. However, they encountered with a strong criticism of the public, because they treated the remains of the fallen soldiers, which were still found in the cockpits of downed machines, unethically. The large expansion of these activities occurred in connection with the premiere of the film *Battle of Britain* in 1969. The first fallen RAF pilot from this battle was identified in 1972 and the first Luftwaffe pilot one year later. The found artefacts lay the foundations for the first private museum, but the official archaeological institutions still did not care of this

² Y. DESFOSSÉS – A. JACQUES – G. PRILAU, *Great War Archaeology*, Rennes 2008, pp. 9–23.

problematic. At the same time, the amateur researchers elsewhere, particularly in Germany, France, the USA, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, became to be interested in the problematic of the air war. Their activities were also very limited to the political situation.³

Later, the remains of the fortification started to be interested for the researchers as well. The selected parts of the defensive lines built during the World War II in Finland were part of the heritage protection and they were researched and documented. These activities are occurring even today. The remains of the Atlantic Wall, that relics were also found in Norway, were documented in the 1990s in France. The research of the fortification from World War II also started in Italy, Germany and North Africa. However, it is still mainly the amateur activities. The involvement of the professional researchers happened for the first time in Britain. There were two projects in Britain – the project Twentieth Century Fortifications in England created by the organization English Heritage and the Defence of Britain Project under the guidance of the Council for British Archaeology. A typology of the main objects of defence was created and supported by the archival sources and tracing in the field during the first project, the second one charted the remains of the anti-invasion positions of the year 1940 with the help of volunteers.⁴ These actions followed up with the activities of journalist Henry Wills, who was interested in the problematic of the British defence system of 1940 in the late 1960s, when he was sent to document the removal of one of the many concrete bunkers on the east coast. During the preparation of his article he found out that there were only little information on this topic, because the defence in 1940 had been made hastily and only a few documents about that survived. Therefore, the volunteers began charting the situation of the field in order to preserve some information for future.

³ M. RAK, *Aeroarcheologie – výzkum havarovaných letounů*, in: Acta FF ZČU, No. 4, 2010, pp. 250–252.

⁴ J. SCHOFIELD, *Military archaeology, Past practice – future directions*, in: Conservation Bulletin, Is. 44, 2003, pp. 4–7; W. FOOT, *Public Archaeology – Defended areas of World War II*, in: Conservation Bulletin, Is. 44, 2003, pp. 8–11.

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The researchers from both projects soon established a close cooperation not only with each other, but also with the other institutions in Britain. Their staff and the workers from the other projects of the monument heritage were trained in recognizing this type of monuments for their next monument protection. All of the registered locations were written to the most important lists of monuments like Sites and Monuments records or National Monument Record. There has been a course of the documentation of the military monuments ran at the University of Oxford open to all interested professionals and the general public since 2000. In 1995 the manual summarizing all the relevant sources, methods of documentation, construction types a locations examined in the context of archaeology of the military monuments was published.⁵ Moreover, a number of the educational and popular documents approaching these activities were created.

The first project finished in 2000, the second one in 2002, but soon was followed by a two-years project the Defence Areas Project. There were involved over six hundred volunteers and identified over twenty thousand military locations. Out of these twenty thousand locations approx. seven thousand were concrete fortresses and positions for heavy weapons and two thousand obstacles on the road, which had complicated the movement especially of the tanks.⁶ Today, these monuments are protected and used in the development of tourism and education, the lectures sometimes are held at chosen locations. The projects have also become an inspiration for other types of research for neglected monuments in Britain, such as the prisoner-of-war camp o the relics of the Cold War.⁷

At the same time, the English Heritage also becomes interested in the issue of the crashed aircraft. A law to protect the wrecked aircraft and ships was created in 1986 in Britain, but it does not solve the problem, how the wreckage

⁵ B. LOWRY (Ed.). *20th Century Defences in Britain. An Introductory Guide*, York 2002.

⁶ <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/cba/projects/dob>; <http://old.britarch.ac.uk/projects/dob/map.html> [12–122013].

⁷ SCHOFIELD, pp. 6–7; FOOT, pp. 9–11.

of the aircraft should be uncovered neither the presence of the archaeologist during the excavation that has been criticized for a long time. The amateur researchers realized this problem and founded association, which has tried to coordinate the activities and also apply the standards of the archaeological praxis. Several studies of the professional archaeologists, who have researched the wrecked aircraft, were created in the 1990s and in this time it was suggested a lot of possibilities, which can be observed in these locations.⁸

At the end of the last century, other historical periods started to be explored – mainly the period of the Cold War and it's the most typical monument the Cold War the Iron Curtain, the relics of the Caribbean Crisis, the War in Vietnam, Civil War in Yugoslavia, the crimes of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. They also began to study the non-military conflicts e.g. the remnants of apartheid in South Africa and gulags in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The study of the conflict areas of the last century is popular and it brings a lot of new and interesting information.

Archaeology of the US Army in the World

Before the explanation the interesting archaeological projects researching the activities of the US Army in Europe, I briefly draft several interesting projects in other parts of the world. Let's start right in the territory of the USA. There has been the mapping the locations, which have the connection with the army activities in past. Firstly, it was mainly the locations of the American Revolutionary War and the Civil War. At the turn of the millennium, however, the interest turned on the locations from the World War II. The main objective was to determine the total number and also the condition in order to preserve them as a cultural heritage. Very extensive project took place in Tennessee.

Between the years 2004 and 2006 there were recorded totally 118 locations, which are only a small fraction of the total locations, which were in the are of the USA in the years 1941–1945. There were locations of various

⁸RAK, p. 252.

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kinds – including the areas, where took place many extensive military exercises (more than 77,000 soldiers participated on the first exercise and during the year 1944 the number of soldiers rose up to 850,000), military training camps, regular military base, military headquarters, prisoner-of-war camps or the locations, where the war production took place (including the aircraft and tank production). A total out of the 87 recorded areas were marked as “short term”, the ones, which were used for a limited period of time (e.g. field camps), but they are sometimes placed nearby the building (barracks etc.). The information about them was mostly gained out of the memories of the contemporaries or the contemporary maps and plans. It was also reported during the survey that the locations from the World War II were particularly threatened to be destroyed by the nowadays development and construction. Although the territory of the United State of America was not directly the battleground in 1941–1945, it was an important training and production centre, after which a lot of traces still remained in the country and its research brings new data to the information from other kinds of sources.⁹

The extensive archaeological researches take places on the important location for the American history, in the Pacific Ocean. Leaving aside the extensive studies of the sunken ships and aircrafts in this area, which are not possible to apply in the Central Europe, but which is an important part of the American archaeological research of the World War II, the mapping of the locations of the invasion and battles on the Pacific islands stands in the centre of current activities. A large number of the relics are still preserved on the islands such as Saipan, Tarawa or Okinawa, including the abandoned wrecks of the combat techniques. Also the activities, as in previous case in the USA, are held particularly to protect these locations against the destruction. However, there is also a unit of the US Army’s Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (closer description further), which is very active, in this area, and

⁹ B. J. NANCE, *An Archaeological Survey of World War II Military Sites in Tennessee*, Nashville 2007.

which has recently managed to find the bodies of many missing American soldiers, ensure their proper identification and burial.¹⁰

At the beginning of the new millennium, the number of the American research teams started to deal with the battle operations in Europe as well. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the first researches focused on the invasion of Normandy in June 1944. The object of the interdisciplinary team from Texas was the battlefield on the cliffs of Pointe-du-Hoc. The Reefs, which are located at the interface landing beaches, became the targets of the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions. The aim of the soldiers was to silence the local artillery batteries, which could threaten the disembarked soldiers. The Americans conquered the position and found out that the main armament was taken away.¹¹ This area was proclaimed as a cultural monument by the French government in 1955 and in 1979 it was even transferred to the US administration. Although the remains of the fortresses on the Atlantic coast were examined over the years, all these activities avoided the reefs Pointe-du-Hoc. The main aim of the team was to document not only the standing concrete bunkers, which were threatened by some soil erosion, but especially the remains of the field fortifications and the effects of the Allied bombing in order to better understand the role of the Ranger battalions while occupying the areas. Moreover, it should have been investigated if the position on the cliff in the Atlantic Wall was unique, and the attempt of the identification of the destructed objects should be made. Finally, the best methods should have been identified to save the endangered location.¹²

A large number of methods were applied to achieve these objectives. It was a classis non-destructive surface exploration of the area combined with the use of the electromagnetic and radar measurements to identify the hidden underground constructions. Also the analysis of the war exploratory

¹⁰ <http://archive.archaeology.org/0211/abstracts/wwII.html> [17–12–2013].

¹¹ S. BADSEY, *Normandie 1944. Vylodění spojeneckých vojsk a průlom z předmostí*, 2011, p. 36.

¹² R. BURT a kol., *Pointe-du-Hoc Battlefield, Normandy, France*, in: D. SCOTT – L. E. BABITS – C. M. HAECKER, *Fields of Conflict: Battle Archaeology from the Roman Empire to the Korean War*, Washington 2009, pp. 383–387.

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aerial photographs and the recorded memories of the contemporaries were used to the recognition of the location. The architects documented all of the standing buildings. The result was the accurate maps, plans and 3D models of the fortifications, as it was published in 2004, and the description of all of the recorded changes from 1944. The identification a reconstruction of the course of the field operations, mainly the defensive fighting position, which were nearby the bunkers, are very interesting and important as well. There has also been an attempt to locate the exact position of the dreaded 155 cannons, which should be used for the defence of the beaches, but, as mentioned above, were taken away before the landing itself. Combining the information from aerial photographs, the testimony of the contemporaries and the metal detector survey was to determine the possible position near the village Circqueville.¹³

One of the most legendary parts of the Atlantic Ocean managed to be mapped by combining various non-destructive methods. The most important thing was certainly the identification of the original trench system and the possible locations of the artillery positions. This could be clarified the Ranger units participation in the overall success of the landing and the role of the reefs Point-du-Hoc in the German defence. Also further research questions were defined for future stage of the exploration.

Several years after the precious project, the attention was paid to another great battle, where the Americans in Europe interfered. It is known as the Battle of the Bulge. The operation began on December 16, 1944 with the attack of the 5th Panzer Army on the 6th SS Panzer Army, which was supported by infantry on the 135 km long line between the Belgian town of Monschau and the Luxembourg town of Echternach. The opponents were mainly US Infantry Divisions, which were reorganized in this area and completed after the previous fights. The Germans took advantage of the bad weather to eliminate the Allied air superiority and also the forested terrain to conceal their activities. However, after the initial successes, the Americans managed to slow the German advance, the defence of Bastonage became legendary. The

¹³ Ibidem, pp. 389–397.

forested and mountainous terrain of the Ardens allowed conceal the German troop movements, simultaneously it determined clearly, through which the attackers could advance. The US troops took advantage in the defensive battles and managed to keep their positions until the reinforcements, which were consisted mainly of the American armoured units, arrived. The Germans gradually lost the initiative and whole their operation the Watch on the Rhine (Die Wacht am Rhein) ended in failure on January 25, 1945.¹⁴

Although a lot of museums commemorate this operation and the part of the field fortification has been preserved and maintained as a memorial since the end of the war, the exact extent of the fortification works had never been documented. In 2007, the first project was created that documented the relics of a forested area in east Belgian towns St. Vith – Schoenberg. This area, which was occupied mainly by the 106th Infantry Division and other smaller units, became the target of the attack of the 18th Grenadier Division, which managed to break the American positions, capture a large number of the American soldiers and conquer the town St. Vith itself during the night from 21st to 22nd of December. The research was conducted on two selected locations. The first area was the Prumerberg space (range 1 km²) located on the east of the town, which lieutenant colonel Thomas J. Riggs chose as the best place for building the defence against the advancing enemy. In fact, this space provided an excellent overview of the main access road from the east and the Germans had to use this road during their advance inevitably. The second research area was located south of Schoenberg, on the border with Germany and it was called Lindscheid (range 0.4 km²).¹⁵

The classical surface survey with the documentation of the found relics was performed on the both selected locations. The length, the width and the depth with the planimetric coordinates were noted for all the relics.

¹⁴ R. J. ARNOLD, *Ardens 1944. Hitlerův poslední pokus na Západě*, 2011, pp. 9–19.

¹⁵ D. G. PASSMORE – S. HARRISON, *Landscapes of The Battle of Bulge: WW2 Field Fortifications in the Ardennes forest of Belgium*, in: *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, No. 4, 2008, pp. 88–92.

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Subsequently, the attempt to determine the type of the field fortification according to the military manuals Field Manual FM5-15 (Field Fortification) was made. It was managed to identify only 11 in Lindscheid, but the number of objects in Prumeberg was 105. The interesting thing is that seven objects from the first location was identified as the positions for the howitzer or the antitank 57mm cannons, whereas there were only 15 similar positions on the second location. The most of the relics on the both sides of the main access road constituted the foxholes for the shooters with rifles, machine guns mortars services and also the covers and the vantage points. It is interesting that the Americans considered the defence foxholes for two men, who could cooperate, better than the foxholes for only one soldier and the dimensions of the found object confirmed this assumption. Other twelve objects were identified as the craters after the shooting. The research showed that the defence had been divided into the depth, where the individual foxholes could have covered the fire and had been built as the strategic locations. This arrangement allowed to reflect the German attacks for four days and prompted the attackers to transport the reinforcements, who finally managed to occupy the area. It was also estimated, on the basis of the structure of the objects in the line, that their occupation needed 239 men, but with the knowledge that about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the line was destroyed by logging and other activities in the post-war period. According to the estimates approximately 300 Americans defended the area and this number is confirmed by the data obtained in the field. But the fact that the area was exposed to a strong German artillery fire was not confirmed, because there were only seven objects interpreted as the craters after the bombing in Prumeberg.¹⁶

The research also showed clearly that the data obtained in the field can complement the information from the written sources and the testimony of the contemporaries and can contribute to a more detailed knowledge and understanding of the observed events. The research has brought much new information about the organizing of the defence and the deployment of the

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 94–106.

different weapons. It has brought new information of the German attack and the damage it caused. Finally, it was documented a unique example of the merging the battlefield of World War II.

The studying of the activities of the US Air Force, especially the famous 8th Air Force, which heavy bombers were involved in the strategic bombing campaign against Germany, has had a long tradition. The first documentation of the air bases, which were used by the Americans during the World War II and after that they were abandoned and deteriorated in the English countryside, started in the 1950s. Already in 1953, the fighter P-51 Mustang from the 357th Fighter Group, which had crashed on March 22, 1945, when also the pilot Otto D. Jenkins died, was uncovered on one of these bases, Leiston airport.¹⁷ It was also the first excavation of the US aircraft, and dozens of the excavations like this have been uncovered since then and they also have enabled the identification and the proper burial of many missing airmen. The searching for the missing soldiers has played a unique role in the USA and in the archaeological research as well.

The first attempt to locate and identify the fallen soldiers was made during the American Indian Wars in the second half of the 19th century and at the end of the Civil War. A special office was established during the World War I, which task was to transport the fallen soldiers back to the USA. The first identification laboratory was founded during the World War II and it identified the fallen with the latest scientific methods using the physical anthropology, but it also helped with the identification of the remains buried in the liberated areas. Although the laboratory ended its activities in 1951, the similar institution was needed on the Korean Peninsula, where the war had broken out earlier. For the third time, the similar institution was founded in 1973 during the Vietnam War. Originally, the institution was called the Central Identification Laboratory – Thailand and its main task was the search for the missing soldiers, the exhumation of the graves and the identification of the bodies and their return to the USA. The laboratory moved to Hawaii under the pressure of the wartime events in 1975, and it has been located at Hickam Air

¹⁷ B. ROBERTSON, *Epic of Aviation Archaeology*, Cambridge 1978, pp. 87–91.

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Force Base on the island of Oahu since 1992 (Central Identification Laboratory – Hawaii, known as CILHI). The new headquarters was established in 2003 with the name *Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command*, which, besides other things, associates Identification Laboratory and the Department for Work in the Field. The main base of this institution is still in Hawaii, the branches are placed in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, because the search for the missing soldiers in the Southeast Asia is the main activity of the institution. More than 88 000 soldiers have been missing – most of them from the World War II, the institution carries out the research in the other parts of the world, including Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁸

The teams of the institution working in terrain use the latest archaeological and anthropological methods, including the high-quality and detailed documentation. The uncovering of the interest area is made at a very high level, when the main reason is to discover and capture all the preserved human remains, which can help with the identification of the fallen soldier and contribute to its subsequent burial with full military honours. This procedure was used while excavating the area of the crash of the American fighter P-51D Mustang from the 55th Fighter Group. Its pilot William Lewis was missing from the great air battle over the Ore Mountains on September 11, 1944. Originally, it was assumed that the airplane had crashed in the Bohemian area, but in 2001 the crash place was managed to locate by the members of the Aero-historical group Kovářská near the German town Oberhof. The team working in terrain uncovered this area, which was examined thoroughly with the metal detection, divided into a square grid and all the excavated soil was sifted. As a result, the wreckage of the airplane was found and also the skeletal remains were identified. Pilot William Lewis could be properly buried in 2004. But the institution does not search only for the crashed aircraft and their pilots, it also participates in the exhumation of the graves of the fallen soldiers from the ground troops from the World War II, who were buried at various locations all round the world.¹⁹

¹⁸ M. RAK, *Nebudete zapomenuti* – pátrání po nezvěstných amerických vojácích, in: Kuděj, No. 2, 2009, pp. 71–73.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 77–78.

The Perspectives of the Recognition of the Presence of the US Forces in Bohemia

The fighting actions of the World War II touched Bohemia at the very end, in spring 1945. It was the Red Army, which proceeded to Bohemia and Moravia from the east, that liberated most of Bohemia, but the south and west areas were liberated by the Americans, specifically by the 3rd Army under the command of General George S. Patton. The soldier from the 90th Infantry Division reached the village Hranice u Aše on April 18. The Third Reich annexed this village as a part of the area of Sudetenland by signing the Munich Agreement from 1938. The Americans liberated Aš two days later. In connection with the Sudetenland, the term “liberated” is probably incorrect. The German-speaking population living in this area did not certainly consider the Americans as the liberators and absolutely did not welcome the American soldiers joyfully. They were just happy the war was over. The battle of Cheb began on April 25 and after that some small clashes happened in the surroundings.²⁰

Other actions in the area of Bohemia were limited by the agreement on the operational areas concluded with the Soviets. The agreement on the definite demarcation line was signed later, on April 30, 1945, and the demarcation line was set on the connecting line among the towns Karlovy Vary – Pilsen – České Budějovice. Mainly the border settlements as Svatá Kateřina, Folmava, Železná Ruda, Bělá pod Radbuzou or Všeruby were occupied until then. The major offensive led by V Corps began on May 5. The target of the 1st Armoured Division was to reach Pilsen through the axis Bor – Stříbro, while the 9th Armoured Division came to Karlovy Vary. But the Germans offered a stiff resistance and the Americans managed to advance to the line Kynšperk nad Ohří – Planá – Klatovy till the evening. The following day, the first units of the 16th Armoured Division came to Pilsen, where had been the uprising the day before, the other American troops liberated for instance Stříbro, Přeštice, Horažďovice, Písek or Český Krumlov. The following day, the Americans came to Rokycany, Nepomuk, Sušice or Strakonice. České Budějovice was

²⁰ K. FOUČEK – M. JÍŠA – I. ROLLINGER, *500 hodin k vítězství*, Cheb 2011, pp. 108–111.

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liberated next day. Although the Germans capitulated mostly without a fight, there were some hard struggles in some places, which cost the Americans 116 fallen and 406 wounded soldiers.²¹

The US Air Force was also very active on the territory of Bohemia. The first fight happened between Pilsen and Nepomuk on February 22, 1944, when the formations of bombers B-24 Liberator returning from an attack on a factory in German Obertraubling became the target of the German heavy fighter Messerschmitt Bf 110. The next fight resulted in the loss of three American and four German planes, all of them landed on the area of Bohemia.²² Pilsen with the significant Škoda Works subsequently became an important goal on the US Air Force bomber, the first attacks in autumn 1944 did not cause any damage. Škoda Works were struck for the first time during a raid on December 20, 1944. However, the surrounding area and the civilian population suffered from each attack. The deathblow for Škoda Works was the very last raid of the famous 8th Air Force on April 25, 1945. The factory complex was heavily damaged during the bombing, but the attackers also suffered from the great losses. Ten bombers were shot down and nearly all other aircraft were damaged (raid was attended by 307 machines B-17). Six downed Boeings crashed on the territory of West Bohemia.²³ A large number of the American fighter-bombers, popularly called “kotláři”, operated over the territory of Western Bohemia in spring 1945. These aircrafts attacked the road and rail transports and other important targets, like airports, barracks, factories or bridges. Some of them were shot down during the operations. As it is stated, the total number of the American losses was 123 aircrafts and 769 pilots, of whom 282 died.²⁴

The US Army remained in the territory of Bohemia even after the end of the fighting. The soldiers built several military camps, ensured the order

²¹ V. MUCHA, *Účast V. a XII. U.S. Corps při osvobození území západních a jihozápadních Čech v dubnu a květnu roku 1945*, 2009 [http://www.valka.cz/clanek_13188.html; 12–12–2013].

²² J. RAJLICH, *Mustangy nad Protektorátem*, Praha 1997, pp. 26–27.

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 125–129.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 133–134.

and the guard duty in the camps for the German prisoners, whose number reached thousands in Western Bohemia. Most of them were repatriated back to the Germany in summer. The last Americans left the territory of liberated Czechoslovakia in November 1945. It means, they were living there for eight months. They also left many relics in the landscape that can provide further information on this topic during archaeological research. Either it is the survey of the places, where happened the clashes with the Germans, or the areas, where the Americans lived after the war ended. Using the modern non-destructive methods can identify these places, document them and prepare them to another phase of research that can be also destructive, classical excavation. The foreign research described above can provide us an inspiration. The problem is that no archaeological department is interested in this issue and also the basic information lacks. On the contrary, this topic is very popular among the amateurs and they managed to accumulate a large amount of data of many different kinds. They also perform the works in terrain, but some of them mainly the ones with using the metal detectors are on the edge of breaking the law. Also the misunderstanding between the two groups prevents closer cooperation. It means that we can lose some valuable information, which a person without an archaeological education is not able to recognize in the field.

Conclusion

The examples mentioned above clearly show that the use of the archaeological methods for recognition the presence and activities of US forces in the area of Bohemia can bring a lot of new and interesting information that the other disciplines cannot provide. While comparing the data with the other non-archaeological source we can gain the comprehensive view on the late phase of World War II in the area of Western Bohemia. During their knowledge, the possibility of applying the most advanced testing and non-destructive methods is offered. The fact that the presence of the Americans in Bohemia was limited in time is also very important for better understanding their activities. The first

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American plane was shot down on area of Bohemia on February 22, 1944, the first American soldier crossed the former Czech-German border on April 18, 1945 and the last unit left Bohemia in November 1945. This allows us to support the work in the field and complete a lot of sources – information from chronicle, police reports, contemporaries' testimony and analysis of the aerial photographs. This allows us to reconstruct the daily life of the soldiers, not only at the end of the war, but also their adaptation and behaviour during the peace. Overall the identification of the relics of the Americans in Bohemia is of no interest to the scientists, which causes that a lot of data have been lost. A major problem in this case is the activities of the “detector men” (men using the metal detectors), who do not document or public their activities and therefore all of the information they had gained disappeared. The first step in attempt to recognize the presence of US forces in Bohemia should be the way of contacting between the professionals and amateurs and finding the way of cooperation between these two groups, which have the same main goal – the research of the issue.

Abstract

The participation of the US Army in the liberation of Western Bohemia in spring 1945 has been a popular topic for historians and non-professional public as well. However, all the books and articles dealing with this theme are based on the written sources or the contemporaries' testimony. The perspectives of the archaeological approach to this topic are quite marginal. This article represents few international projects, which have dealt with the activities of the Americans during World War II, and nears its possible application of the realization of this topic in our country.

Keywords

Archaeology of the Conflicts in 20th Century; the US Army; Western Bohemia; World War II; Aeroarchaeology