Paleokarst
a systematic and regional review

EDITED BY PAVEL BOSÁK

ACADEMIA / PRAHA
Preface to the 2008 digital reprint of “Paleokarst: a systematic and regional review”

This book was conceived and designed 24 years ago during an international speleological meeting at an Outdoor Training Centre at Maletin in what was then Czechoslovakia. The meeting drew cave explorers and safety instructors and a few karst scientists from a number of European countries. It was an exciting time to be there because these were the early days of perestroika. In the west many of us knew that a lot of good science was being done on the other side of the Iron Curtain but access to the people and their publications was often difficult for us and, of course, it was much harder for eastern colleagues wanting access to the west. I attended as a vice-president of the International Speleological Union at the time, in hopes of moving interchange and collaboration along.

It was Professor Jerzy Glazek, a Polish expert, who first made the ambitious proposal that an international compilation of what was known about paleokarst, systematic, regional and worldwide, be assembled and published. With the benevolent oversight of the late Professor Vladimir Panoš, doyen of Czech karst studies, a group of us met, hammered out some acceptable definitions of paleokarst and agreed the broad outline of contents for the book. The dynamic polyglot, Dr Pavel Bosák, was everyone’s choice for Editor-in-Chief to drive the project along, which he did with his customary vigour. The text was to be entirely in English and I undertook to edit it (lightly) for clarity and style.

This book involved 33 contributors from eighteen different nations. It was compiled and edited by “snail mail” in the days before the Internet or word processing were in common use and had little or no budget of its own. For the majority of the writers English was neither their first nor second language. Many relied on friends or acquaintances teaching English (but knowing nothing about karst or geology, etc. in general) for technical translation. Quite a lot of improbable terms popped up, along the lines of the old chestnut in civil engineering, “water goat” (meaning “hydraulic ram”). I believe that I guessed most of them correctly but apologize for errors that you may spot and for some stilted awkwardness that escaped me. Knowledgeable readers will notice one or two prominent omissions in both the systematic and regional parts. Chiefly these arose where deadlines were missed by one year or more. The book came off the presses early in 1989, and has been out-of-print for a number of years.

Derek Ford
Orillia, Canada.
May 2008.

Note from the Karst Waters Institute

The Institute wishes to thank the many authors and their heirs who agreed to the digital re-publication of this important text. Original figures were not available for the undertaking, so the quality of some images is marginal. Nonetheless, the main content of the articles should be well conveyed and useful, we hope, to the readers.
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