

ACHIM LEUBE, Wilhelm Unverzagt (1892–1971). Archäologe in vier politischen Systemen. Berliner Archäologische Forschungen volume 23. Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH, Rahden/Westf. 2024. € 69.80. ISBN 978-3-89646-574-0 (Print). 381 pages with numerous figures.

Wilhelm Unverzagt was one of the most influential prehistorians of the 20th century in Germany. From 1926 to 1945, he was director of the *Staatliches Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (State Museum of Prehistory and Early History) in Berlin, which was important far beyond the German capital. After the Second World War, W. Unverzagt established the East Berlin *Institut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Institute for Prehistory and Early History at the German Academy of Sciences and Humanities) and remained its director until the age of almost 72. These prominent positions justify a monographic biography, which has been written for just a few archaeologists of the 20th century (e.g. for Gustaf Kossinna [GRÜNERT 2002] and Herbert Jankuhn [MAHSARSKI 2011] in Germany). As the foreword reveals, the author has analysed extensive file collections for this purpose: in the *Bundesarchiv* (Federal Archives) as well as in the archives of the *Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities), the Humboldt University Berlin, the *Römisch-Germanische Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* (Romano-Germanic Commission of the German Archaeological Institute) and the *Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (Museum of Prehistory and Early History) in Berlin.

Six pages are necessary to present the detailed table of content. Divided into two parts, part I of the book deals with Unverzagt's professional life between 1914 and 1964. It starts with the *Wilhelminische Reich* (pp. 29–45), followed by the Weimar Republic (pp. 47–82), the Nazi regime (pp. 83–115), the capitulation until the founding of the *German Democratic Republic (GDR)* (pp. 117–161) and the GDR period (pp. 163–210). Part II is devoted to Unverzagt's activities at the Berlin academy between 1945 and 1964, capturing the institutions and committees there (pp. 215–242), other committees and advisory boards (pp. 243–263), hillfort research (pp. 265–284), urban archaeology in Magdeburg (pp. 285–303), international cooperations including West Germany (pp. 305–323), Unverzagt as editor and promoter (pp. 325–337) and the time after Unverzagt's retirement (pp. 339–342).

The title of the book spans the history of two thirds of the 20th century. To be precise, there were not only four, but actually five political systems in which the hero of the book was archaeologically active: Achim Leube devotes a 45-page chapter to the period of Soviet occupation between the Nazi regime and the founding of the GDR, i.e. to just four years. As the author deliberately refrains from making judgemental assessments, the extent to which the political circumstances shaped Unverzagt's actions remains unspoken. What did they do to this archaeologist and how did he behave under changing constellations? Where can continuities and changes be recognised? The fact that Unverzagt was consistently successful suggests both research expertise and political adaptability.

Originally from Wiesbaden, Unverzagt studied Classics from 1911 to 1917 in Bonn, Munich, Berlin, and Frankfurt/Main; at the same time, he worked as a research assistant at various institutions. Following his military service from August 1914 to February 1916, when he was wounded and interrupted his studies, he worked in the euphemistically named “*Kunst- und Kulturschutz*” (“Art and Culture Protection Service”) in occupied Belgium and northern France until the end of the war. The defeat of Germany saw Unverzagt's move to the *Waffenstillstandskommission* (Armistice Commission) before he became an employee of the *Reichskommissariat für Reparationslieferungen* (Ministry for Reparations Deliveries) from 1920 to 1924. From this perspective, the end of the German Empire in the November Revolution of 1918 has not yet been a major turning point in Unverzagt's biography.

It was not until 1925 that Unverzagt returned to archaeology. At the beginning of the year, he was awarded his doctorate in Tübingen with a thesis on terra sigillata with specific decoration, whereupon Carl Schuchhardt recruited him to the *Abteilung für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (Department of Prehistory and Early History) at the *Völkerkundemuseum* (Ethnological Museum) in Berlin. The following year, the department became an independent museum, of which Unverzagt was appointed director – he remained so until 1945 and again through political upheavals. For the period up to 1933, the author provides a wealth of information on the museum, personnel contacts, archaeological activities in the Oder region, international contacts, and teaching prehistory at Berlin University, where Max Ebert was appointed after Gustaf Kossinna retired in 1926. However, M. Ebert died in 1929 and it was not until 1935 that the staunch Nazi Hans Reinert was appointed his successor. From the beginning of Nazi rule in 1933, Unverzagt was not only an honorary professor at the University of Berlin, but also the curator of archaeological monuments for the province of Brandenburg – both since 1932.

In 1938, the Brandenburg archaeological heritage authorities were reorganised and Unverzagt was replaced in this previously honorary position. The decisive factor was not differences in content, but institutional competition. This also applied to the conflict between the *Reichsbund für Vorgeschichte* in the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP) Amt Rosenberg and the *SS-Ahnenerbe*, on whose side Unverzagt positioned himself. Unverzagt undertook excavations from 1932 to 1934 in Zantoch an der Warthe to research “a castle in the German East”, from 1938 to 1943 in Lebus near the Oder river and from 1942 to 1944 in the fortress of Belgrade in Serbia, interested mainly in the early middle ages. Unverzagt experienced the end of the war in the anti-aircraft bunker at Berlin Zoo station; the boxes containing the gold finds from his museum were transported to Moscow by a group of Soviet soldiers at the end of May 1945, where they only reappeared 50 years later and are still stored as spoils of war today. Unverzagt remained silent about this transport for the rest of his life.

The end of the Second World War was a turning point for Unverzagt – photos show a thin, starving man. Because of his NSDAP membership, he was initially no longer allowed to work at the university, especially in a subject as charged as prehistory, even though many colleagues were in his favour. Unverzagt therefore endeavoured intensively to establish an *Institut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (Institute for Prehistory and Early History) at the Berlin Academy of Sciences and Humanities, which was to be reopened and restructured along Soviet lines. As its forerunner, a corresponding commission was set up in April 1947 under the official direction of the medievalist Fritz Rörig; Unverzagt quickly became very active and replaced F. Rörig after two years. While he worked in East Berlin, he lived in the west of the city, which was soon divided during the Cold War, and cultivated a wide circle of acquaintances there. In the East, Unverzagt's election as a full member of the Academy, which had already taken place in 1939 but had not been authorised by the regime, was confirmed in 1949.

For the GDR period, A. Leube proceeds strictly chronologically and treats the events year by year. In 1952/53, the *Kommission für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (Commission for Prehistory and Early History) gave rise to the institute at the Academy that Unverzagt had been striving for, as well as the section of the same name, an advisory board that was to represent all prehistoric research in the GDR. This gave Unverzagt a central role for the GDR, just as the Academy as a whole was intended to have a centralised position. Unverzagt was instrumental in drafting the GDR-wide *Verordnung zum Schutze und zum Erhalt der ur- und frühgeschichtlichen Bodenaltertümer* (ordinance on the protection and preservation of prehistoric and early historical archaeological sites), and his institute was responsible for the preservation of archaeological monuments in the eastern part of Berlin until the mid-1960s due to the four-power status of the city. In this section, we learn a lot about organi-

sational and research activities, networks, and people, and Unverzag's manoeuvring between East and West. Director in East Berlin, living in West Berlin – this situation did not change when the Wall was built in 1961 and meant daily border crossings. In 1964, the 71-year-old Unverzag was replaced and sent into retirement – so he was not “dismissed”. He was succeeded as director by Karl-Heinz Otto, who was loyal to the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), but Unverzag remained chairman of the *Sektion für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (Section for Prehistory and Early History) until it was dissolved in 1968. In his private life, Unverzag was a bachelor for a long time until he got finally married at the age of 61.

This biographical part of the book (part I) is followed by a comprehensive systematic overview of Unverzag's activities in the GDR (part II). This initially concerns the Berlin Academy of Sciences and Humanities, its tasks, activities, and staff, as well as Unverzag's committee memberships (of these, the *Kommission für Unterwasserforschung* [Commission for Underwater Research] is presented in more detail, the first head of which bore the descriptive surname Kapitän [captain]). Unverzag's interest in hillfort research, which can be traced back to the late 1920s, is discussed; this resulted in a corpus project, which, however, came to a halt after two volumes by Paul Grimm and Joachim Herrmann. The extensive destruction of the city of Magdeburg made archaeological excavations in the ruins possible, which led to the temporary establishment of an on-site workplace. International contacts were increasingly limited to the socialist countries, as the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED) leadership and the Eastern Bloc insisted on keeping their distance from the West. The fact that Unverzag's institute was integrated into a new, significantly larger “central” institute in 1968 was not connected anymore to its founding director, but with the fundamental reorganisation of the GDR academy.

Leube's book primarily deals with the years 1945 to 1964 – more than 70 % of the text (about 220 pages) cover this period. Unverzag's previous career in the First World War, the post-war period (20 pages) and as museum director from 1926 to 1945 (70 pages) take a back seat. The account contains an extraordinary amount of detailed information on people, events, institutions, committees, research projects and publications. Research into the history of archaeology will gladly and extensively refer to these diverse highlights. An index could make it easier to access the wealth of detail. As the volume is divided chronologically along the political caesuras of 1918, 1933, 1945 and 1949, it is particularly clear how the institutional framework differed and which scientific organisational activities Unverzag developed. How Unverzag's research changed in terms of content or not will be judged primarily based on his writings, which are mostly short essays and reports.

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