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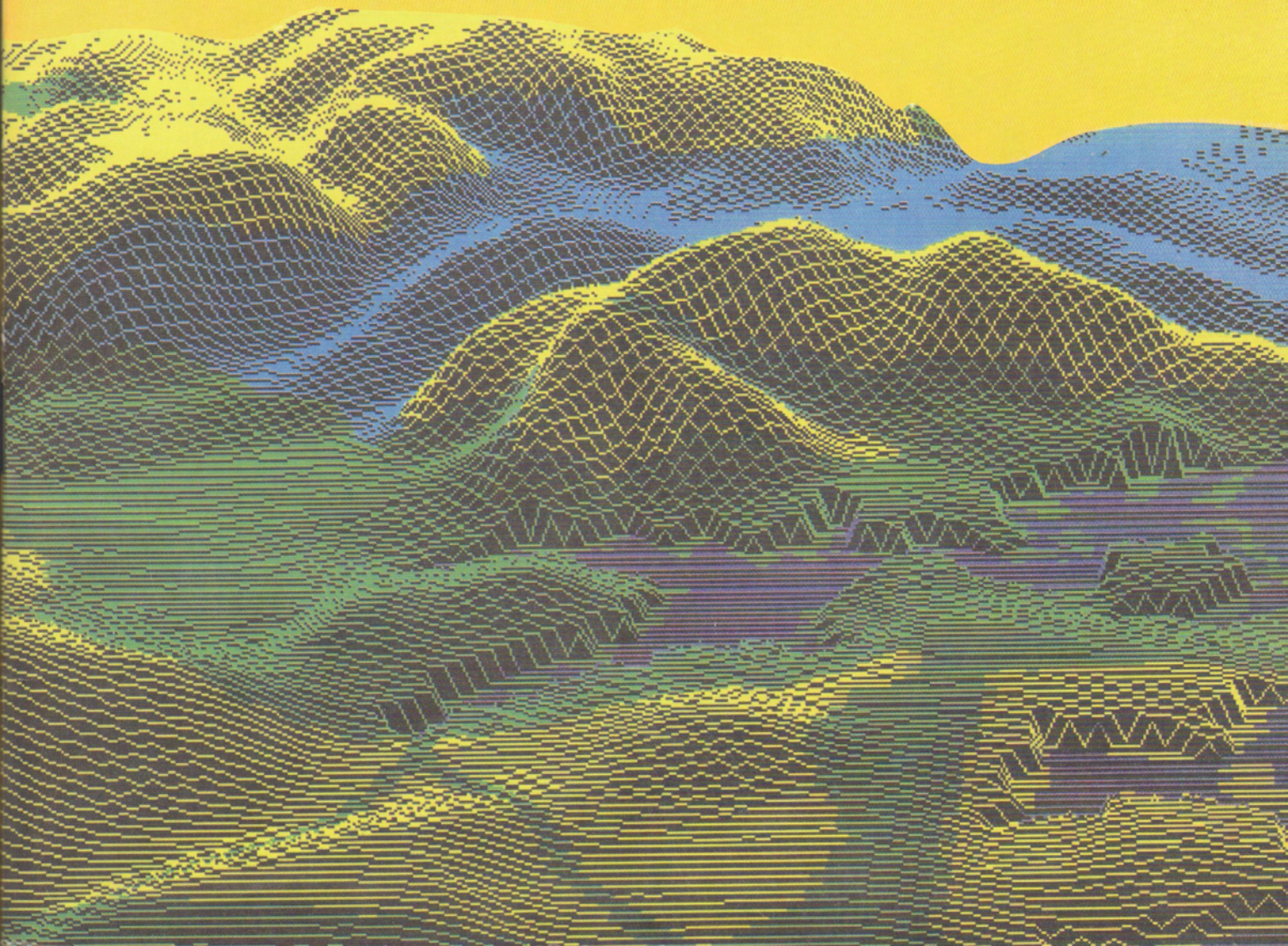

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(The Moravian Karst - The Labyrinths of Understanding)

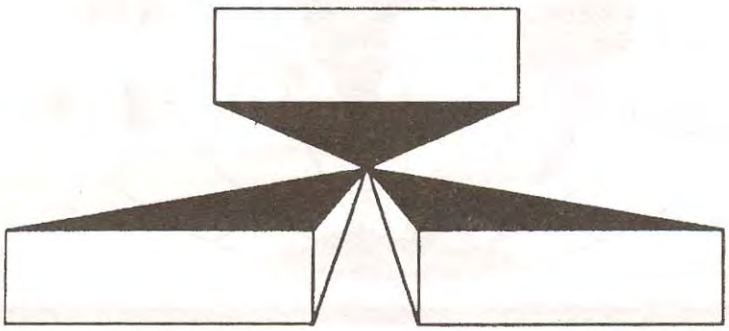
Rudolf MUSIL (ed.): Moravský kras - labyrinty poznání. GEO program, Jaromír BLIŽŇÁK, 336 pp., Adamov 1993.

Antonín IVAN

The Moravian Karst is a small area of 85 sq. km north of the town of Brno, composed of Devonian limestone. Numerous attractive surface and sub-surface forms and phenomena are very important for understanding landscape evolution of the whole eastern part of the Bohemian Massif. This also corresponds with a very long tradition of karst research, extensive literature and efforts to preserve this unique landscape. At present, the Moravian Karst is a Landscape Protected Area which is - however - overloaded with intensive tourism.

Exhaustive description of all karst explorations before the 2nd World War was given by famous investigator of the area, prof. Karel ABSOLON (1877-1960) in his posthumously published book 'Moravský kras' (The Moravian Karst) which was published in two volumes in 1970.

The book of prof. Rudolf MUSIL and his collaborators summarizes results of karst studies made mainly over the last twenty years which were characteristic of very successful discoveries (not without losses of human lives) of cave systems (mainly the Amateur Cave which is more than 10 km long), which substantially contributed to knowledge of the very complicated sub-surface hydrography. In addition to recent investigations, chapters about geological structure, topography, climate, hydrology, biogeography, mining, settlements, landscape protection and environmental issues are included, too. At the same time, many problems remain to be resolved yet.

In comparison with the book of prof. ABSOLON probably main progress concerns geological structure of the area. There are also some new ideas postulated such as Pliocene pediments in the northern part of the Moravian Karst or already Paleogene initiation of deep river valleys (both in limestone and crystalline rocks). However, the most difficult problem - depressional character of the northern part of the Moravian Karst with regard to non-carbonate rocks in its surroundings - remains unresolved.

A certain shortcoming of the book is low quality of print of geological and karsological maps. We also assume that instead of the karsological map, a geomorphological map pointing out all karst phenomena would have been more useful. Also, an extensive list of references showing that results of research have been published in specialized journals in English or German, summaries of the texts and explanations to the maps, figures and photographs in these two languages would have been desirable.