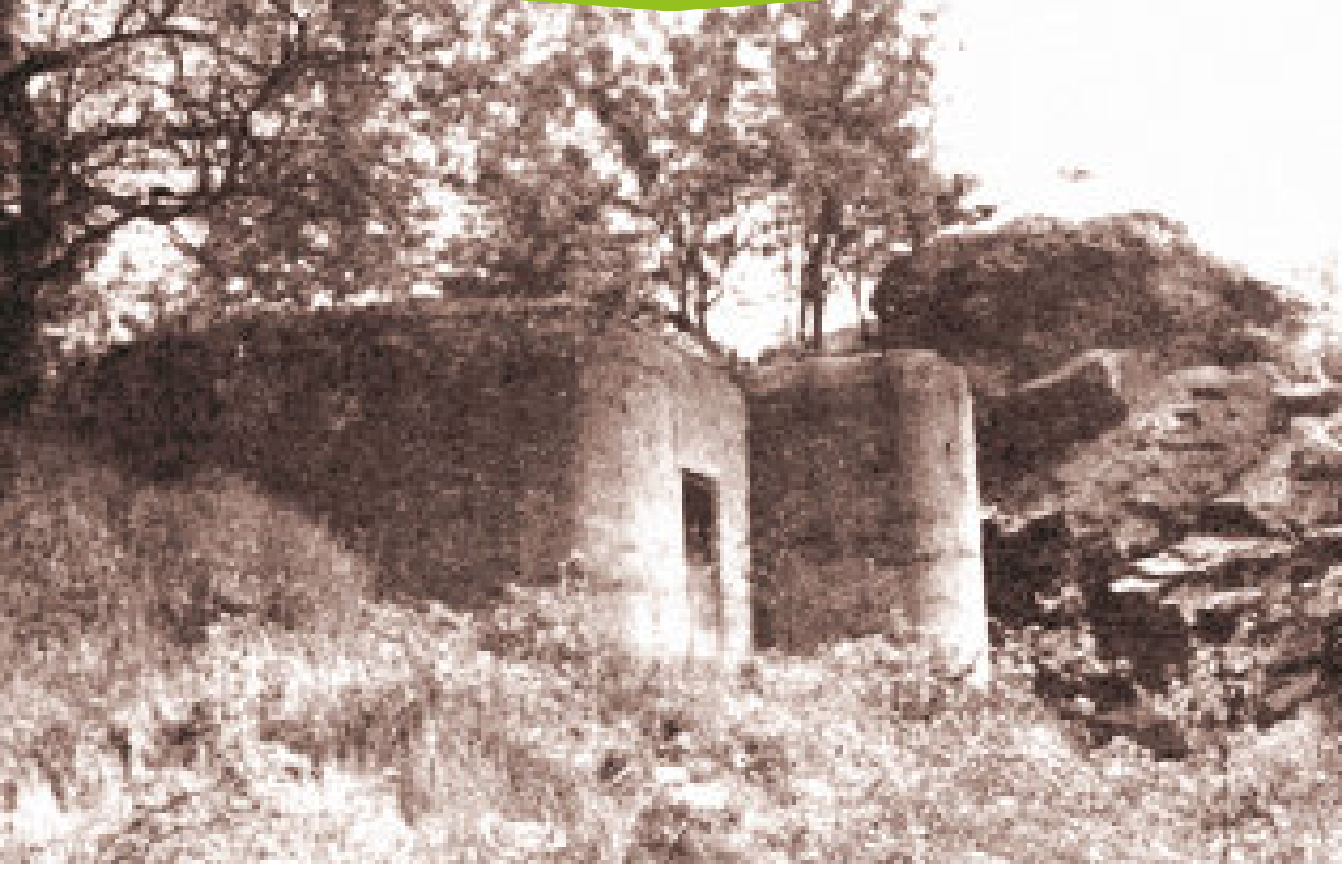




The Borderguards' Path

1



Length of Path 17,5 km

This instructional path is based on the history of the southwestern Czech border defence. There are many dramatic human fates connected with Kašperské Hory area because of the unpleasant conditions for life in the borderland. Each border is highly important for its country – it defines the sovereignty of the country. That's why it marked the fates of the local inhabitants there.

The path goes through the wonderful nature of the Šumava mountains. You will go along one of the light fortification line from the 1930's.

You will learn about the border fortification against the threat of fascism, about the interior equipment and about the soldiers' feelings inside the bunkers. You will acquaint yourselves with their resolution face to face with the threat of attack.

But the border goes here through more than one millennium. Previously, the Celts had mined here a rare and precious metal – the gold. The most famous Bohemian king, Charles IV., supported the importance of this region – he had the Kašperk castle built. The purpose of the castle was to protect the gold mines and so called Gold path, but mainly to protect the old frontier between Bohemia and Bavaria. And what is the frontier if there is no smuggling on it?

The shifts of the border's importance are interesting. For example the refugees had been running away from the Nazi Germany to the democratic Czechoslovakia during the 1930 s. There were some fellows who had managed to break through a very sharply guarded frontier (The Iron Curtain) and they had escaped from the Communist Czechoslovakia to the West Germany between 1948 and 1989 .

The irony of fate had trifled cruelly with the bunkers built against Hitler. All of them had to be handed in to Nazis /in an undamaged condition/ according to the Munich conference. The German army made the training on them – the soldiers were learning how to conquer the fortification systems in Europe. How might the soldiers, the labourers and the architects of these bunkers have felt? But stop speculating for now and let's follow a track of the frontier guard. Maybe, we will partly understand...



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The Borderguards' Path

2



Length of Path 17,5 km

The thick forests bordering the Czech Republic were favourable from the military point of view /they were resistant to outside attacks/, but the disadvantages of such a reservedness were getting more and more noticeable. Charles IV. struggled for better trade connection between Bohemia and West Europe. That is why he founded a new traderoad called „Gold path“ in 1356. One of its branches /beginning in Pilsen/ ran through Klatovy, Sušice, passed the Kašperk castle, through Kašperské Hory and it finished in the Bavarian town Passau. The garrison was at the Kašperk castle to support the security of traffic on the new traderoad. The building of the castle started in the same year as the building of the traderoad. The Gold path was an advanced type of road in the Middle Ages. According to Charles' privilege from 1366 for Kašperské Hory the goods was transported in various wagons but not with use of pack animals. Lot of goods was imported from the area along the river Danube to the kingdom of Bohemia for example the salt, Bavarian linen, many kinds of wine, spice and other goods including luxurious objects like expensive fabrics. Corn, malt, honey, butter, lard, eggs, fish and the cattle were the goods exported from Czech. The travelling in the Middle Ages was neither safe nor cheap. After the Gold path had been finished a new privilege for Kašperské Hory came into being. According to the direction of Charles IV. all the merchants, who used the Gold Path for travelling, had to stay in the town over night. This kind of accommodation was secure, but they had to pay for it.



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The Borderguards' Path

3



Length of Path 17,5 km

The case of smuggling and public violence of Kilián Novotný in Stará Huť from January 27, 1933 the account from the police station in Nezdice na Šumavě: „Kilián Novotný committed a crime as he and his companion Jan Fastner from Stará Huť no. 94 met the police patrol in the hall of the house belonging to Evarist Petlička in Pohorsko no. 42. the patrolman Diblík addressed Fastner and at the same moment Kilián whacked the second patrolman, warrant officer Fabricius, by elbow on the stomach, causing him a momentary pain and leapt to the exit of the hall where he slipped on frozen stairs and fell, but immediately he was running away without any injury towards the near forest and he disappeared there in fog and darkness. Fabricius chased him, but he did not catch him he could no go on running because of a great stomachache.

The police patrol caught these two men going out of Evarist Petlička's flat and it wanted to find out the identity of these two strangers. After that Kilián Novotný committed the described violence to save himself by getaway. The patrolman Diblík captured the second man immediately after that accident and later he was revealed and depicted as Jan Fastner, the smuggler of the foreign artificial sweeteners.

One kilogram of it was found by him at his personal examination. A knife modified into one-sided dagger was found by him too that is why he was given to the County Court in Kašperské Hory because of the offence of the armament patent. In addition to it there were two more kilograms of foreign artificial sweeteners found under the stairs in the flat of Evarist Petlička. Fastner maintained that it belonged to his companion, but he did not tell his name. Fastner was arrested by the County Court in Kašperské Hory under the number 17. During the investigation the police found out that they were dealing with two daredevil and impudent smugglers who had been selling the foreign artificial sweeteners to local traffickers in the flat of Evarist Petlička just before the police patrol came and who were on the point of departure homeward.“



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The Borderguards' Path

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Length of Path 17,5 km

You can find several concrete bunkers of the Czechoslovak army from the 2nd half of 1930 s on our walking trail. In those days, Czechoslovakia were preparing themselves for the defence against the expected German attack. That is why they decided to secure their borders by the system of fortification. At this place we are dealing with the kind of light fortification type 37 colloquially referred to as ŘOPíky, because the Central Office of the Fortifying Works /Ředitelství Opevňovacích Prací/ operated their building. As for the structure of these bunkers, they are based on the structure of the infantry log cabin from the heavy fortification. They used the side fire strategy. All the objects together created continuous lines and they supported one another at all sides. The wall in the direction to the enemy was very massive coming up to the thickness of 80–100 cm. In front of the wall, there was one more wall made from many stones put together and covered up with soil.

The most usual type A has got two shooting rooms. The reason for its great occurrence is the hilly terrain in Šumava mountains so that the fortification line does not create the usual straight line as it does in the flatlands. The objects use to have two shooting rooms as well, but one of them is intended for the side fire along the line and the second one, that is laced in the front wall, is intended for direct fire against the enemy. You can come across this type quite often in the hilly terrain of Southwest Czech. The type D has only one shooting room. It was most commonly used in the steep slopes. It often shot at the roads in the valley. Typical example of it are many “D’s” in the valley along the river Otava near Annín. Their structure looks like one half of the object A.



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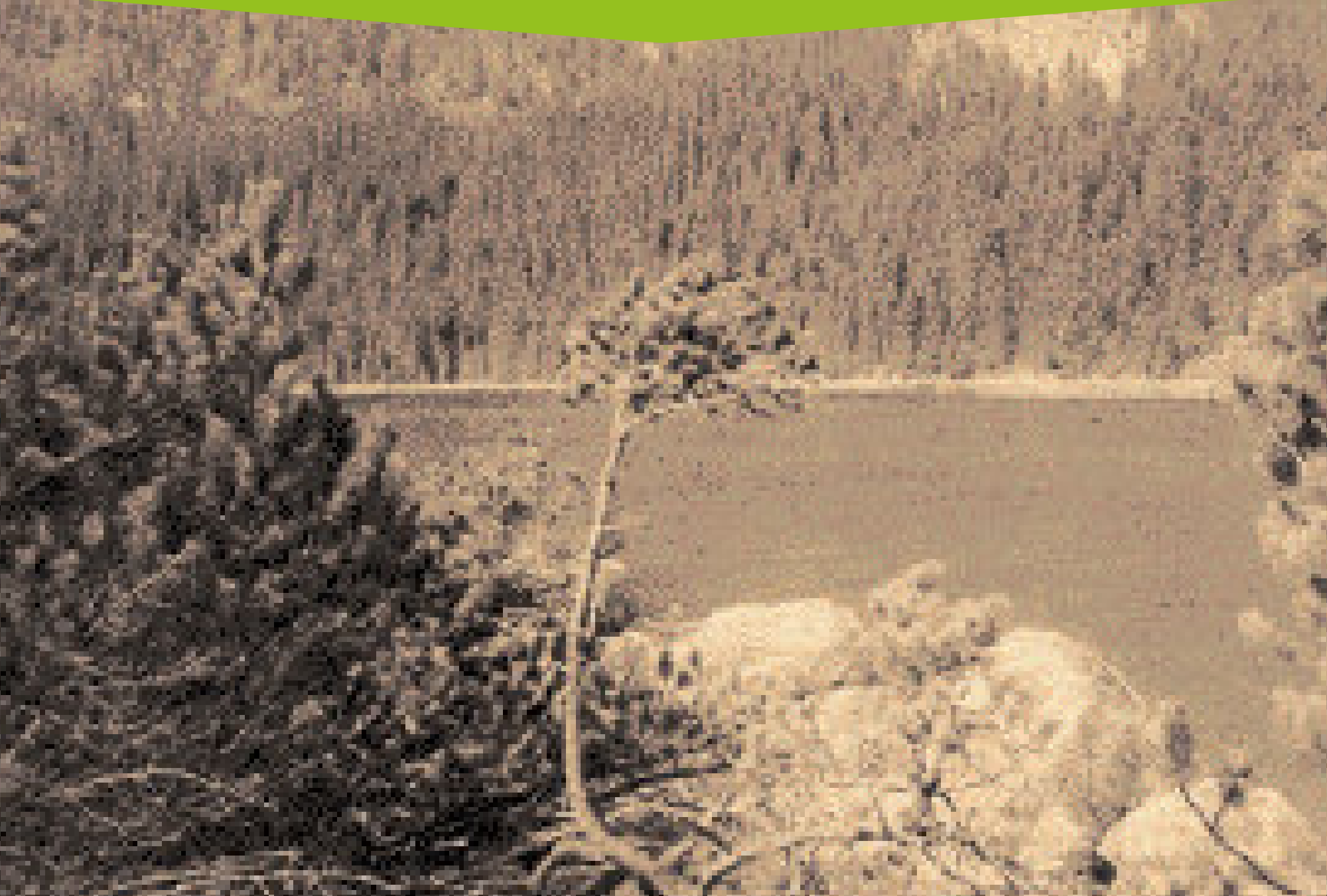


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The Borderguards' Path

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Length of Path 17,5 km

The legends of the King of the Šumava mountains go back to the time of the occurrences after February 1948. This man took people, who did not want to live in communism, over the borderline. The accessible documents indicate Kilian Nowotny, the highlander of German origin, as the most probable King of the Šumava mountains. His father was considered to be a legend among smugglers. Young Kilián used to go with him on his “smuggling-paths” already in the age of nine. The financial guard shot him on the borderline in the beginning of 1920 s.

Kilián Nowotny was transferred to Germany in 1945. He had been collaborating with CIA and he had been taking the agents over the borderline to Czechoslovakia and the emigrants from Czechoslovakia to so called West Germany. He had been using old path called “canals” for this purpose. Each of those paths used to have its number. The canals 1–59 deal with the story about the King of the Šumava mountains. The canal n. 54 began near the brickyard called “Pod Sloupem” (“Under a Column”) several kilometres far from Vimperk. It was the place where Nowotny met the people who wanted emigrate. The canal led through Michlova Huť, over a very sheer hill called Kamenná (1,101 m) to a very small village called Nový Svět (“New World”). The dangerous part of the smuggling-path began here because they had to pass Chalupská slat’ (a moor). Another problem was to come across the Teplá Vltava river over a foot bridge near Františkov – several members of StB (secret police) assaulted here a group of emigrants in 1950. Only the King of the Šumava mountains rescued. He went on passing Stolový Hřeben (a mountain ridge) in the direction of Bučina and he came across the borderline to Germany somewhere near the spring of the Vltava river. The line of red tourist marks leads through these places.



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The Borderguards' Path

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Length of Path 17,5 km

Within the preparations for the defence of the country Czechoslovak government issued an order about the formation of units from the members of gendarmery, police, financial guard and so called “military reinforcements” [= the reserve soldiers who were becoming its members after their activation]. These units were named “The Guard of State Defense” /S.O.S. units Stráž Obrany Státu /. Their duty was to take care of the unviolability of the borders and the state and to cooperate by maintaining the public order in the borderland.

Only dependable soldiers could become the members of these units. They had been chosen in advance. They were subordinated to the Department of Defense. The members of the army had to oversee the due training of the S.O.S. units. The units were divided up into squads for the purpose of greater activity. Each unit got one M.G. to be stronger in fire. S.O.S. units cooperated very much with the units of Czechoslovak army in their surroundings. In case of armed attack, they had to fight off the first strike of the enemy and allow the mobilization of the reservists into the fortification on the borderline.

In May 1938, the S.O.S. units reached the greatest number of 28,310 men. They stood in the first line. That is why they suffered heavy losses during the disturbances in the year 1938. There were 302 Czechoslovak soldiers and S.O.S. members killed and 436 soldiers and S.O.S. members wounded during the defense against the German, Polish, Hungarian and Carpatho-Ukrainian partisans from the beginning of September 1938 to the March 17, 1939.



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The Borderguards' Path

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Length of Path 17,5 km

In case of mobilization, the system of LO [lehké opevnění = light fortification/LF] was occupied by the troops whose soldiers had been trained especially for that mission. These units were called ZLO – regiments [zajištění lehkého opevnění = the security of the light fortification/SLF]. The Klatovy region was included in the 32nd BD. Its codename was “Mikuláš” [Nicholas]. The HO n.32 [HO = hraniční oblast = border district/BD] was protected by the SLF – regiments n.153 [with the base in Domažlice] and by the SLF – regiments n.154 [with the base in Pilsen]. The members of these units were drawn from the local inhabitants. It should increase their morale and fighting power. Only dependable soldiers were taken who had been chosen in advance. In case of mobilization, they were supposed to start immediately the occupation of the LF

sectors. The Defence Department created a special type of units for guard and defence of the frontiers. They were called HP [hraničářské prapory = frontier battalions/FB]. FB units were followed by so called “B” formations that were set to take action in the endangered sectors. In the Klatovy region, the second infantry division operated. This division contained the 35th, the 18th and the 46th regiments of infantry and the 2nd regiment of artillery. Its headquarters was situated in Pilsen and was led by general Václav Pozdíšek. According to directions, the infantry division should consist of aprox. 14,000 men, 36 light cannons of 8–10 cm calibre, 36 AC /antitank cannons/. In September 1938, this number wasn't realized by the majority of divisions, the units had up to 18 AC and several of them even did not have any AC, 18 minethrowers of 8 cm calibre, 300 light M.G.s and 54 heavy M.G.s.



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The Borderguards' Path

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Length of Path 17,5 km

There used to be a small village called Ždánov at the foot of the hill Ždánov in the elevation of about 940 m above the sea level. It used to have several parts – the most important of them – Přední Ždánov /Fore Ždánov/ Zadní Ždánov /Back Ždánov/north-westward of it and the farm called Peklo /Hell/.

The Ždánov village was found by the settlers from abroad who settled here in the Middle Ages. The exact date is not known. It was built as a village for the miners and woodmen, mainly because of the gold output in the Ždánov hill. That is why it was built in the proximity to the shafts. It is known that the Back Ždánov consisted of seven numbers. In 1840, the whole Ždánov consisted of fourteen numbers including 109 inhabitants and it belonged to the parish of Kašperské Hory. One cobbler used to live in the village for the most of time who earned his living by shoe-reparations. Up to the 1920 s, there had been a pub called V Předpeklí /“In the Forehell”/ with the sale of bottled beer and tobacco.

Bad luck accompanied Ždánov in the modern history. There was a tuberculosis epidemic in the 1920 s – several inhabitants died. Another unlucky accident happened in just after the World War II – five children died during the play with the ammunition they had found. On June 29, 1945 the majority of the Ždánov inhabitants had to present themselves at the assembly centre in Dlouhá Ves whereupon they were transferred to Bavaria. That happened in regard to the events connected with the end of the Czechoslovakia in the late 1930 s and owing to the behaviour of the most of the Bohemian Germans during the World War II.



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The Borderguards' Path

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Length of Path 17,5 km

There are two firing rooms inside the type A and B and only one inside the other types. The guns were put in the guncarriages suspended in loopholes for the purpose of better fire. The gap in the loophole could be smaller and there was much smaller probability that it would be hit by the enemy. These gaps could be covered or partly covered by the armoured plates as a piece of equipment. There was a tin panoramic map attached to the gun-carriage. Its special pointer showed the exact point in the terrain where the gun was aimed. This allowed the accurate fire in a zero visibility, for example through the smoke screen or at night.

The gas products being produced by firing were caught by a catcher and the pipes took them through the rearward wall outside the object. The periscope was intended for watching the surroundings. And there was a so called "grenade chute" /the pipe embedded in concrete at the angle of 35° that could be shut from inside/ intended for the defence of its nearest surroundings.

The walls inside the object were panelled /with wood/. It muffled the sounds, worked as a thermal insulation, it was a good protection against the splintering of the concrete in case of hit, various equipment could be fastened to it.

The garrison of type A and B consisted of seven men. The commander and his deputy kept the situation under observation and they led the fire. Two men operated the M.G.s and two other men filled the magazines and operated the grenade chute and the loophole in the door. The operation of the ventilator and supply of the object were the task for a messenger.

Masking colours or the masking nets were used for the camouflage. The rearward wall was equipped with the hooks /called "pig tails"/ for fastening a masking net.



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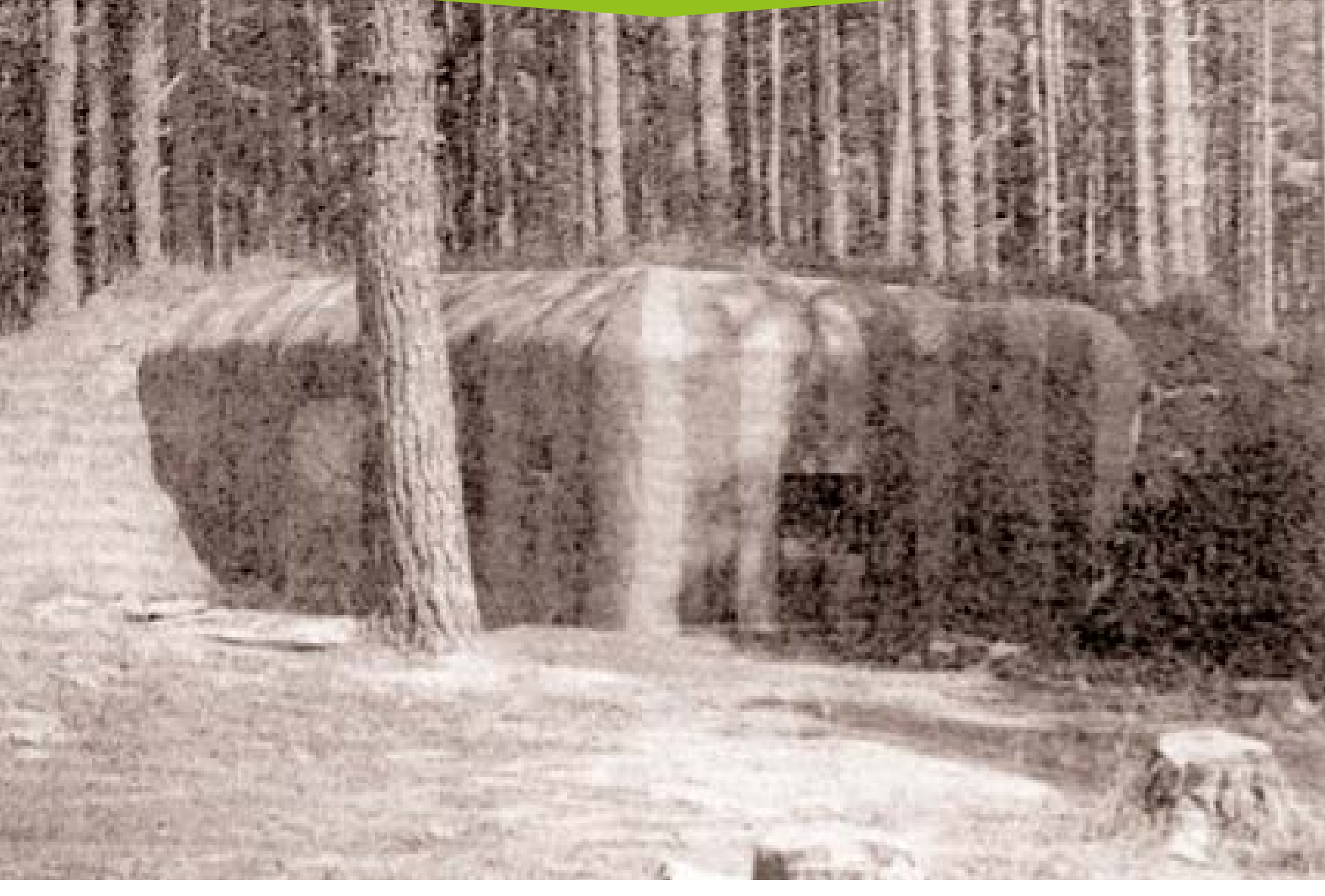


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The Borderguards' Path

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Length of Path 17,5 km

From Rules of light fortification's commander

1. Watch carefully the sector confided to you, struggle to find out the news – if you have seen anything suspicious, report it to your commander and warn your neighbours – if you do this way, you will never be surprised. Watch the neighbouring objects as well.
2. The M.G.s are your major guns. You and your garrison have to be able to operate these M.G.s – employ each moment in improving your operating skills
3. Keep the M.G.s in order and cleanness and have your mask still prepared.
4. Remember that one object protects another one by shooting – therefore do your best to avoid the casualties of your friends and to protect your neighbours every time.
6. Do not forget to start the ventilator immediately during the fire – the gas arising during the fire could endanger the garrison.
8. Keep your bunker clean – realize that you must stay there and that cleanness prevents you from illnesses.
9. Divide the duties so that each member of the garrison would have a good possibility to have a rest. Each member is supposed to sleep during that time to gather new energy. Avoid consuming the reserve rations intended only for the state of emergency. Realize it may happen that you would have to stay in the bunker for several days without the possibility to be supplied with any food.
10. Trust in your object. Realize that even the artillery can not damage it.



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The Borderguards' Path

11



Length of Path 17,5 km

The line of bunkers in the Kašperské Hory area consists of several sectors built in succession. We deal here mainly with the sector H-40 that is the code-name for Sušice. It consisted of four so-called independent shooting roadblocks. The first one called Ždánov was situated on the road between Kašperské Hory and Nezdice na Šumavě. It consisted of six objects type 37.

The second block was situated near the village Tuškov. It consisted of six bunkers as well. The road between Kašperské Hory and Bohdašice should be closed by that block. The competition for the building of sector H-40 was advertised in May 26, 1937. The winner was the firm belonging to Ing. Prokop from Strakonice because they offered the lowest price /17,785 Kč for one object/.

The sector included 41 objects of light fortification type 37. In September 1938, all of them were concreted and prepared for the possibility of use. Eighteen objects were destroyed during the occupation so that the fighting value of the sector became zero.



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The Borderguards' Path

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Length of Path 17,5 km

In the Middle Ages, the Kašperk castle was an important part of the defence of the southwest frontier and in the Sušice area. Charles IV., its founder, devoted his name to this castle. In the year 1356 he ordered his architect Vít called “Hedvábný” /“Silky”/ to build the castle Kašperk for the purpose of “the defence of Bohemia”.

The garrison of the castle was to guard the borderline and the gold-bearing district around Kašperské Hory and to support the security of traffic on the new trade road called “Gold path”. One of its branches led from Sušice through Kvilda to the Bavarian town Passau. The Kašperk castle – mainly its center – makes an impression of monumentality, but its defence was very passive from the military point of view /relying on the hilly terrain of bad access/. Charles IV. supposed Kašperk to be only one of many other fortified centers meant for the assembling of the troops in case of any attack on their country. They should attack the enemy from here. This kind of defence represents so-called “active way of defence”, when the army doesn't defend itself in the fort /and let the invaders rob and plunder in the surroundings/, but it tries to push the invaders out of the country or destroy them as soon as possible. On the contrary, the passive way of defence is typical for not very mobile armies that depend by the defence on the troops safely enclosed in the forts. The Czechoslovak military doctrine in the 1930 s preferred the passive way of defence although the army was being supplied with the modern tanks and aircraft – the guns for the active way of defence.



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Length of Path 17,5 km

The fortification line of the Czechoslovakian army from the 2nd half of the 1930 s was built to protect the democratic Czechoslovakia against the attack of the Nazi Germany. It's interesting but characteristic of the history how some objects, thanks to the combination of the historical happenings, serve the contrary purpose than they were built for. This is the case of the part of the Czechoslovakian fortification near the town Bruntál in the Moravia.

At the beginning of the October 1938, the members of the 7th German parachute division, while occupying the borderland, attacked the empty bunkers near Košetice in the region of Bruntál for the purpose of exercitation. The Germans relied here on the cooperation between the parachutists and the air infantry.

German commandants revealed a number of imperfections by that exercitation and they removed them during the next few months. German parachutists, paratroops and the indispensable sappers, who launched the charges in close vicinity of the loopholes, could practise here almost everything what they needed to be able to conquer the forts, which were considered the main buttresses of French and Belgian defence. The objective example of it was the capture of the main Belgian fort called Eben Emael in less than no time.

After the Munich conference Czechoslovakia (29. 9. 1938) was compelled to give a big part of it's fortification line over to Germany. As an irony of fate, the Czechoslovakian forts, which were built to oppose the Nazis, served the aggressor as a perfect place for practising and improving his attacks.



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The Borderguards' Path

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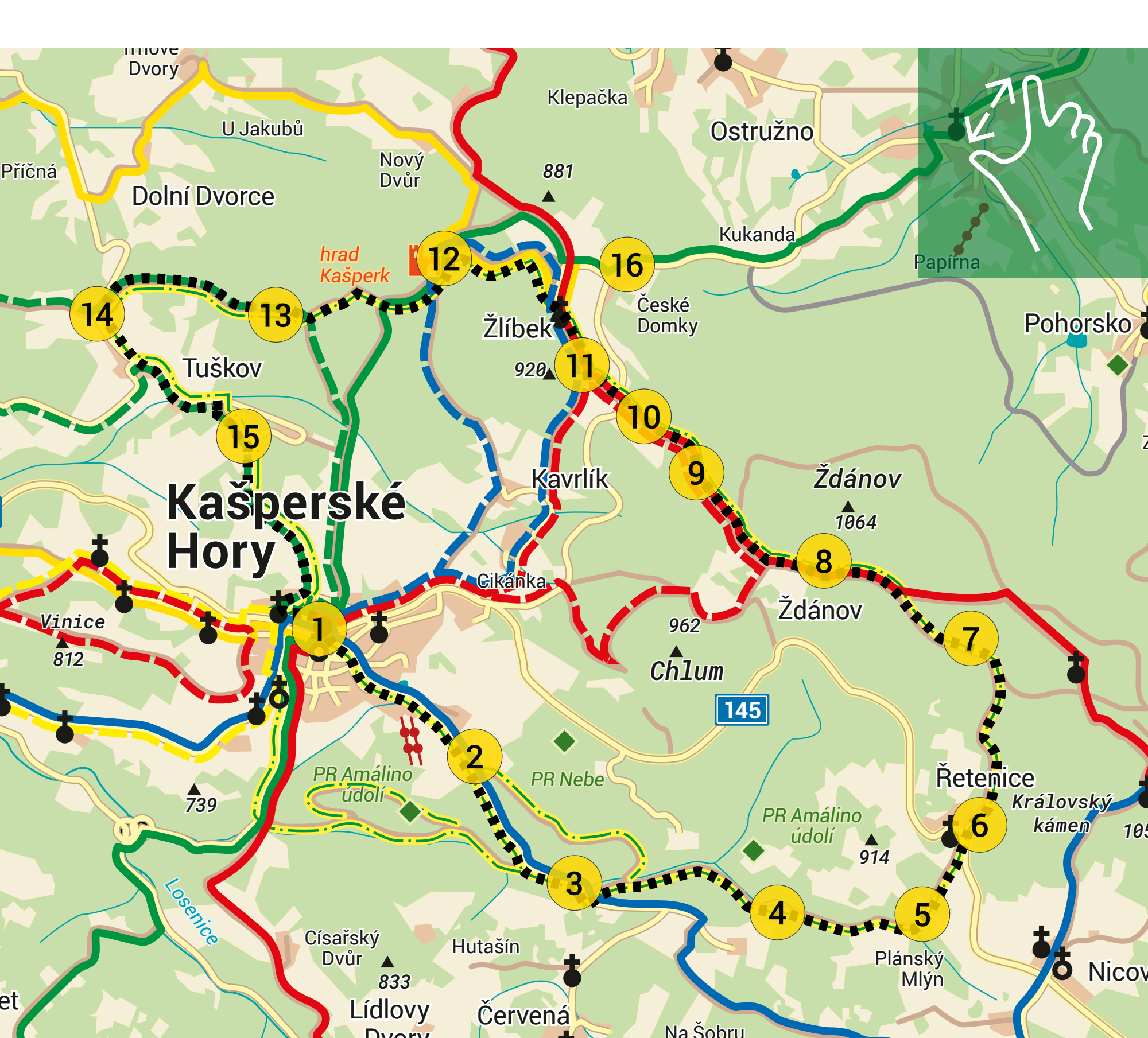
Length of Path 17,5 km

The defence of the entrance located in the rearward wall was typical for the objects type 37 in contrast to the type 36. Object 37 was closed by the door with a grate the thickness of its bars was 2 cm. It was possible to fire through it from the entry loophole that was placed in the wall just in front of the entrance. The loophole could be covered inside by the positional cover.

There is a drainpipe in the entry corridor and the armoured door /the thickness of one centimeter/ at the end of the corridor which includes the closing gap suitable for fire.

In the late 1950 s, the fortification by the west border was activated because of the tense international relationships. It was necessary to adapt the contemporary bunkers – to cover up the rearward wall with soil, to create the entry shaft from the former entrance /with use of prefabricated profiles/ and to equip them with anti-pressure door. The entry loophole has been obstructed owing

to it. The equipment was supplied by a new gun-carriage UL-1. We can often see a wire cloth covering the loopholes as it was in case of prewar camouflages. The majority of the objects are adapted in this way in the area of Šumava. They had been kept in good repair until 1990, so that they were ready for an immediate use.



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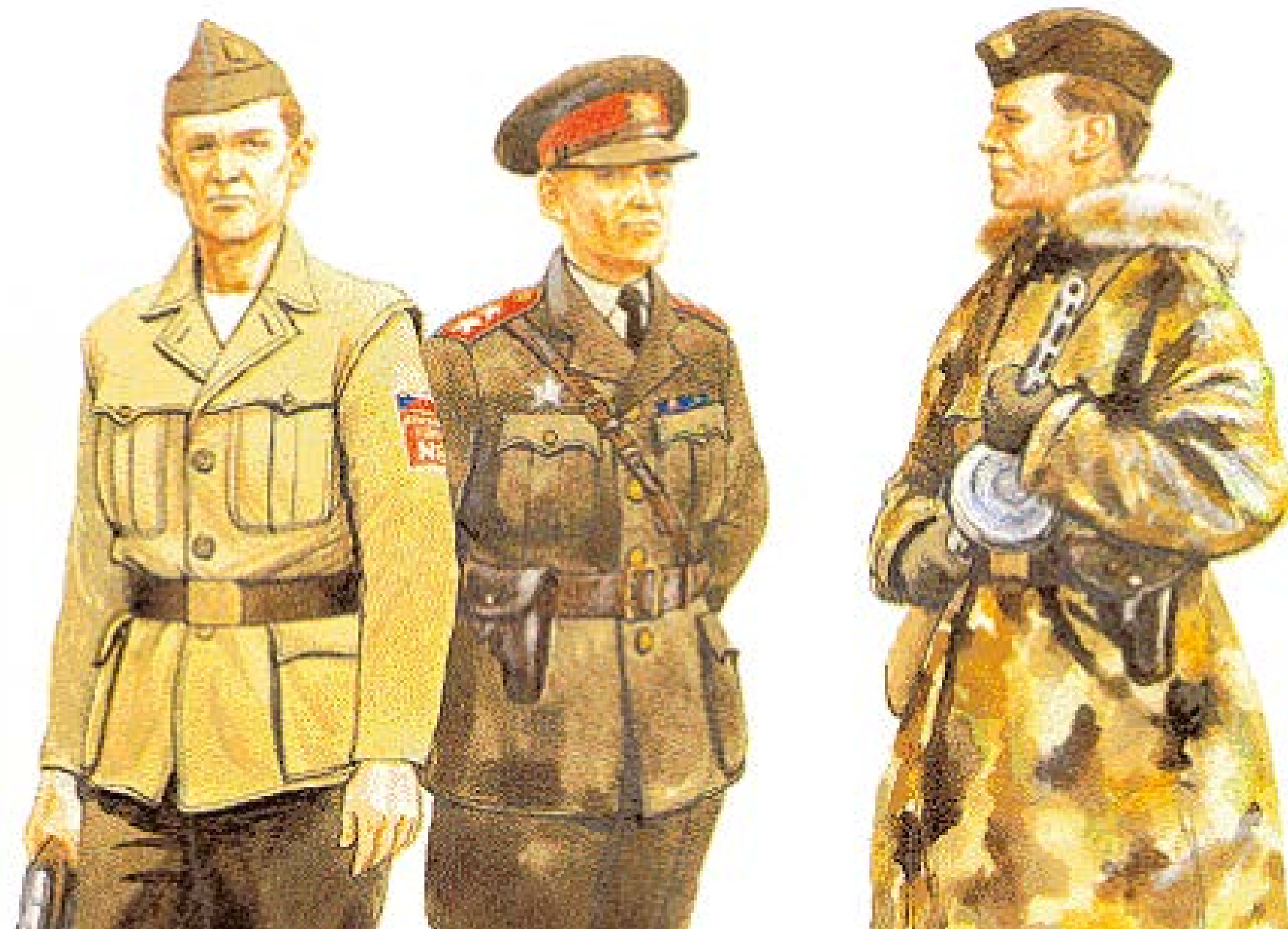


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The Borderguards' Path

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Length of Path 17,5 km

Another man who used to be called “The King of the Šumava mountains” was Josef Hasil. After this man had finished the SNB school in Protivín, he took up as a cook in Zvonková /the SNB station/ in January 1948. In the same year after the putsch in February he started taking people across the borderline to Germany. Another of his activities was giving the reports and the collaboration with CIA. Karel Starý helped him with accommodating people who wanted to flee the country.

Hasil met them at Starý's, his trails led to the south of Kilián's trails, they started generally in the area of Soumarský most. This place became fatal for Karel Starý's family because the gunfight occurred after one of the Hasil's groups had happened to meet the guard during their way over the borderline. One of the refugees lost his backpack with some newspaper during that action. The name of Karel Starý was mentioned there as a name of subscriber. The police arrested all his family and condemned them together to 102 years in prison. Hasil got 9,5 years in prison but he managed to escape and fled to Germany in 1949. After some time he emigrated to USA to the Chicago city.



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