

Legacy of the one-armed commander in the shadow of the red star: the conservation of burial monuments from the Austro-Prussian War in Hradec Králové between 1948 and 1989

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ABSTRACT: *The unique collection of funerary and sepulchral sculptures represented by heritage properties from the War of 1866 has never been the subject of research and management by an official (legal) heritage institution. One of the reasons for this was the existence of a traditional and influential civic initiative in the form of the Society for the Preservation of War Monuments on the Hradec Králové Battlefield. From its foundation, this association was personally associated with conservation experts, restorers, artists, and historians, as well as with local elites; this enabled it to survive after 1918 and even after 1939. In the early 1950s, the Society was dissolved and disbanded on the basis of Act No. 68/1951 on voluntary organisations and assemblies. The assets were forfeited to the state. This article focuses on the functioning of the Society in the (semi-)illegal regime, on the professional and personal networking of former members within the more or less official structures of legal conservation, and on the strategy of their activities*

KEYWORDS: building preservation; Austro-Prussian War; historical memory; sepulchral heritage items; voluntary association

Odkaz jednorukého setníka ve stínu rudé hvězdy. Péče o funerální památky z prusko-rakouské války v letech 1948–1989

ABSTRAKT: *Unikátní soubor funerální a sepulkralní plastiky, který představují pomníky z války roku 1866, nebyl nikdy jako celek předmětem výzkumu a správy ze strany oficiální (legální) instituce památkové péče. Jedním z důvodů byla existence tradiční a vlivné občanské iniciativy v podobě Spolku pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém. Tento spolek byl od svého založení personálně propojen nejen s odborníky na památkovou péči, restaurátory, umělci a historiky, ale zejména s lokálními elitami, které mu umožnily přežít i po roce 1918 a dokonce i po roce 1939. Na počátku 50. let byl Spolek na základě zákona č. 68/1951 Sb. o dobrovolných organizacích a shromážděních zrušen a rozpuštěn. Majetek propadl státu. Tento článek se zaměřuje na fungování Spolku v (polo)ilegálním režimu, na profesní a personální zasíťování bývalých členů v rámci více či méně oficiálních struktur legální památkové péče a strategie jejich působení.*

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA: ochrana památek; prusko-rakouská válka; historická paměť; sepulkralní památky; dobrovolnická sdružení

The following paper concerns a society that has taken on many names since its inception more than one hundred and thirty years ago (*Komité pro udržování pomníků na bojišti Královéhradeckém* [Committee for the Preservation of Memorials on the Hradec Králové Battlefield], *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém z roku 1866* [Society for the Preservation of Wartime Monuments on the Hradec Králové Battlefield of 1866]; *Komité pro udržování památek z války roku 1866* [Committee for the Preservation of Monuments from the War of 1866]); in spite of the name changes, however, the essence of its work, i.e., caring for wartime graves and memorials from the Austro-Prussian War ever since its founda-

tion at the close of the 19th century, did not change and was even carried out at times which were unfavourable for society activity, such as those after 1950. It can be said that the actual fates of the society illustrate, in many aspects, the standing of the history of the war of 1866 in Czech consciousness and are to a certain extent intertwined issues.¹ In our paper we would like to focus on the functional existence of the “Committee” under a (semi-) illegal regime, on the professional and personal networking of former members within the bounds of more or less official structures of legal heritage conservation, and the strategies (taking into account some contra-strategies) of their work.

■ Footnotes

1 Despite its long history, during which time a number of local elites passed through the society, the history of the society is not a stable part of wider public consciousness. This is illustrated in a publication by Zuzana Hloušková (ed), *Historie spolkové činnosti na Hradecku*, Hradec Králové 2001, in which there is not a word about the Committee, even though the introduction claims that readers will find therein a unique publication “which for the first time offers a comprehensive overview of society activity in Hradec Králové and its surroundings”. The vast majority of information about the history of the society has thus far been published in its own internal materials and has evidently not escaped this bubble to any considerable extent.

The Austro-Prussian War of 1866 occupies a special place in Czech historiography. Although it would be untrue to say that it is an unknown conflict, with even a few lines dedicated to the event in history textbooks, only a handful of experts are still ever interested in the history of the war, often generations apart. This results in no great generational continuity on the topic to speak of.² The situation is diametrically opposite, however, if we look at it from a local perspective. In doing so, we somewhat surprisingly find that the wartime events of 1866 are alive in the regions of the former battlefields to this day and are reflected by broader (and highly diverse) social circles.³ This is mainly the case of the battlefield at Hradec Králové, the site of the decisive battle in the Austro-Prussian War on 3 July 1866 which, if we remain aware of all the differences, is closest to that which French social scientists term *lieu de mémoire*.⁴ There are multiple reasons for this situation; one of the main, and perhaps the most decisive one, is the authentic wartime experience of diverse strata of society at that time that later transformed into numerous memorials above the wartime graves.⁵ There are around 500 of them at the Hradec Králové battlefield, the last of them erected in 2016 as the completion of a plan dating back to 1913.⁶ This number and a certain continuity make the Hradec Králové battlefield of 1866 somewhat unique as a place of historical reverence, even in an international comparison.⁷ The years 1948–1989 were crucial for this heritage zone. The following passages are arranged chronologically according to the type of specific strategy used by the members of the Committee at the time. There are eight types in total, and they are described, as much as possible, in two appropriate terms that mirror either the form of collective cohesion of the group of semi-illegal preservationists in question, or the form of their activities.

Strategy a) autopsy and charisma

To understand the context, we need to briefly mention the overall development of heritage conservation on the battlefield. The battlefield at Hradec Králové from the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 began to take on the character of a place of remembrance soon after the war went silent during that year. The first memorials appeared on the battlefield at the turn of 1866 and 1867, their number rising for a decade or so.⁸ As the decades passed, however, the graves and memorials on the Hradec Králové battlefield began to succumb to the ravages of time, the physical condition of the monuments

there becoming so bad at the end of the 1880s that it was even mentioned in the contemporary press.⁹ It proved to be the case, however, that civic society, rather than the state structure, noticed the situation and intended to do something about it. A society was founded on 2 December 1888 under the name of *Komité pro udržování pomníků na bojišti Královéhradeckém* to specifically care for the burial monuments from the Austro-Prussian War at Hradec Králové. The idea was hatched by Jan Nepomuk Steinský (1848–1922), who became the first chairman of the society, a retired commander who had been involved in the battle campaign himself and who had suffered serious injury at the Battle of Hradec Králové, resulting in the amputation of his arm. Steinský was therefore driven by inner motivation and by a personal story, and most likely by the charisma necessary for the plan to work.¹⁰ During Steinský's time as chairman (1888–1911), the society was therefore able to eliminate the threat that the military graves from 1866 would disappear and instead increased the number of memorials on the battlefield, either on its own or by instigation.¹¹ While the Hradec Králové battlefield boasted 227 memorials in 1891, this number rose to 419 shortly before World War I.¹² The memorials and military graves meant that the events of the bloody summer of 1866 became a stable part of the landscape of the Hradec Králové area and a part of social consciousness, hand-in-hand with the tourism that began to emerge.

Strategy b) tourism and museology

The outbreak of the World War naturally led to a downturn in society activity, and the societal position of the Committee in the Hradec Králové area changed significantly after 1918 because of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic.¹³ The decline in interest in monuments linked to the extinction of the monarchy is logical, as is the turn of attention toward military graves from the Great War. What is important is that the memorials on the Hradec Králové battlefield from the Austro-Prussian War did not suffer any great harm in the era of post-revolutionary iconoclasm.¹⁴ The activities of the society from Hradec Králové in the initial years of the new government were

3 Vojtěch Kessler – Josef Šrámek, 'Obrazy války v historii aneb Mantinely recepcce válečných událostí na příkladu války roku 1866', *Marginalia Historica* VII, 2016, pp. 105–131.

4 Vojtěch Kessler, 'Petrifikace vojenské paměti versus píeta. Válečné pomníky a hromadné hroby v jejich historickém provozu', in Jiří Roháček (ed), *Epigraphica & Sepulcralia* VI, Praha 2015, pp. 363–376; Josef Šrámek, 'Bojiště z roku 1866 u Hradce Králové jako místo historické paměti sui generis. Příspěvek ke genezi památkové zóny z prusko-rakouské války v letech 1866–1996', *Časopis Společnosti přátel starožitností* CXXVI, 2018, pp. 203–220.

5 Josef Šrámek, 'Nešťastné jsou obce, na jejichž polích krvavé furie války v zkázyplném reji zuřily... Život na královéhradeckém venkově ve válečném roce 1866', in Jitka Balcarová – Eduard Kubů – Jiří Šouša (eds), *Venkov, rolník a válka v českých zemích a na Slovensku v moderní době*, Praha 2017, pp. 189–207.

6 Vojtěch Kessler, 'Hromadné hroby a pomníky na královéhradeckém bojišti', in Eva Macková (ed), *Monumenta vivent* VI, Jaroměř 2017, pp. 6–21; Vojtěch Kessler – Josef Šrámek, 'Kdybychom na ty padlé zapomněli, je to, jako by zemřeli podruhé. Sepulkrální památky na královéhradeckém bojišti z roku 1866', in Jiří Roháček (ed), *Epigraphica & Sepulcralia* VIII, Praha 2019, pp. 279–302.

7 Božena Pacáková-Hoštálková, 'Asociativní a organicky vyvinutá krajina bojiště bitvy u Hradce Králové', *Zprávy památkové péče* LXXIV, 2014, pp. 435–446; Viktor Blažek, 'Krajinná památková zóna území bojiště u Hradce Králové', in Macková (ed) (note 6), pp. 57–63; Vojtěch Kessler – Josef Šrámek, 'Krajina jako fixátor lidské paměti – příklad královéhradeckého bojiště z roku 1866', in Lenka Jarošová – Jindřiška Týranová (eds), *Krajina a lidé*, Opava 2020, pp. 83–98.

8 Josef Šrámek, 'Proměna královéhradeckého bojiště z prusko-rakouské války v pietní památkové území v letech 1866–1936', in Macková (ed) (note 6), pp. 22–55, in particular pp. 22–26.

9 Z bojiště u Sadové, *Ratibor* VI, 1889, No. 16, 12. 1., p. 242.

10 Im summary about life and work of Jaroslav Dvořák, *Jan Nepomuk Steinský. Otec válečných hrobů z roku 1866*, Hradec Králové 2011.

11 Cf. Výroční zpráva Komitétu pro udržování pomníků na bojišti Královéhradeckém za správní rok 1898, Hradec Králové 1899; Výroční zpráva Komitétu pro udržování pomníků na bojišti Královéhradeckém za správní rok 1906, Hořice 1907; Bericht des Komitee zur Errichtung und Erhaltung der Krieger-Denkmaale auf dem Schlachtfelde bei Königgrätz über seine Tätigkeit 1889–1909, Kuttenberg 1911.

12 Jan Brůha et al., *Průvodce po bojišti u Hradce Králové z roku 1866*, Hradec Králové 1996, p. 25; Šrámek, 'Proměna královéhradeckého bojiště' (note 8), pp. 27–28, 36–55.

13 Josef Simon, *50 let trvání Spolku pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém z roku 1866*, Hradec Králové 1939, p. 26.

14 Cf. Zdeněk Hojda – Jiří Pokorný, 'Denkmalkonflikte zwischen Tschechen und Deutschböhmen', in Hans Stekl

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2 Vojtěch Kessler – Josef Šrámek, 'Quo vadis bellum germanicum? Zamyšlení nad historiografií prusko-rakouské války roku 1866', in Jana Čechurová – Josef Žemlička et al., *Souboj mečů, idejí a charakterů. K životnímu jubileu prof. Ivana Šedivého*, Praha 2019, pp. 119–131.



curbed by the end of the umbrella organisation *Ústřední spolek pro udržování válečných pomníků z roku 1866 v Čechách* (Central Society for the Preservation of War Memorials from 1866 in Bohemia), the remit of which passed to the Ministry of National Defence, which subsequently set up a special foundation at the Vocational School for Stonemasons and Sculptors in Hořice, which was itself closely linked to the society for battlefield in terms of personnel.¹⁵ The transformation, however, was not problem-free. The development of the monument zone, gauged in terms of building memorials, essentially came to a halt after 1906, and the society, also affected by the confiscation of some of its own property, mainly focused on the upkeep of the Hradec Králové battlefield during the interwar

period.¹⁶ The culmination of one stage of transforming the former battlefield into a place of reverence came in 1936, when new markings for hiking trails were put in place and a new guide to the battlefield was published. The main event, however, was the construction and opening of the 1866 War Museum. These activities too were initiated by private circles, predominantly *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém z roku 1866* and its sympathisers.¹⁷ The work of the members and supporters of *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém* (as Steinský's society was called under the new system of governance) was all the more necessary due to the fact that Czechoslovak heritage legislation was not born easily, and

Fig. 1. *Fighting for the village of Chlum on 3 July 1866 in the author's imagination at the end of the 19th century. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.*

Fig. 2. *The fact that the war of 1866 affected a wide social strata became a cornerstone of the consolidation of the former battlefield as a commemorative and then a monumental area. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.*

Fig. 3. Jan Nepomuk Steinský (1848–1922), participant in the Prussian-Austrian War and founder of the 1866 Committee for the Maintenance of War Graves on the Hradec Králové. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

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– Hans Haas (eds), *Bürgerliche Selbstdarstellung. Städtebau, Architektur, Denkmäler*, Wien 1995, pp. 241–251;
Nancy M. Wingfield, *Flag War and Stone Saints. How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech*, Cambridge – Massachusetts – London 2007, passim; Vratislav Nejedlý, ‘1. světová válka, památky a památkáři’, *Zprávy památkové péče* LXXIV, 2014, p. 268; David Novotný, ‘Poškození soch v Heřmanově Městci v poprevratovém roce 1919’, *Chrudimské vlastivědné listy* XXIX, 2020, pp. 6–14.

15 Ladislav Michálek – Irena Michálková, *Kamenův hlas. O válce roku 1866*, Praha 2009, pp. 75–76; Martin Barus et al., *130 let Komitétu pro udržování památek z války roku 1866 (1888–2018)*, Hradec Králové 2018, pp. 72–75.

16 Simon (note 13), pp. 18, 26–39.

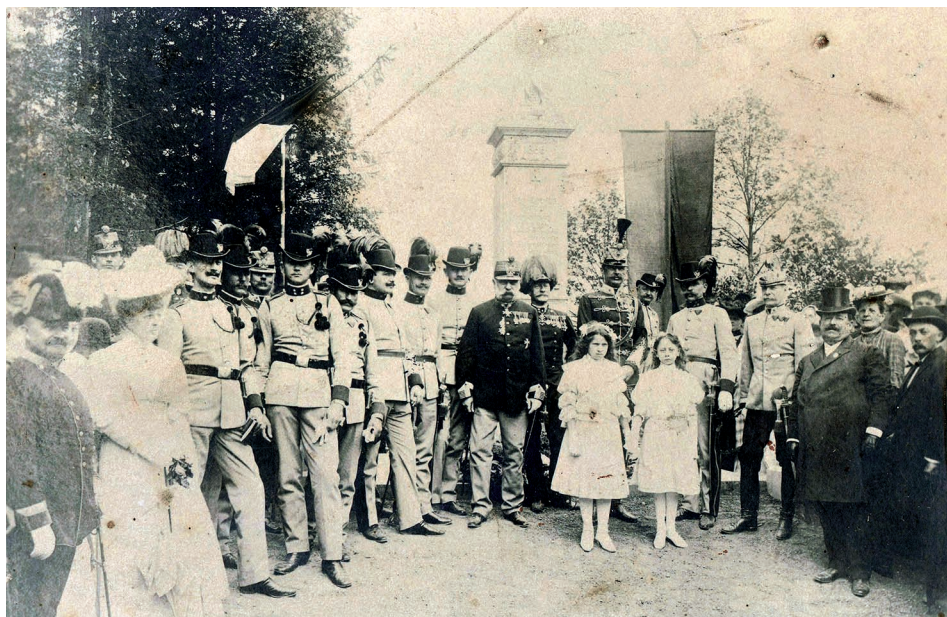
17 Josef Šrámek, 'Vznik Válečného musea 1866 na Chlumu ve světle soudobých polemik (1910–1936)',



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Fig. 4. Jan Nepomuk Steinský at the monument of the Austrian Infantry Regiment No. 12 at the foot of the Svib Forest, where the idea of founding the Committee originated. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 5. František Waldek (1862–1930), vice-chairman and later second chairman of the 1866 Committee for the Maintenance of War Graves on the Hradec Králové Battlefield. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 6. Unveiling of the monument of the Austrian 30th Battalion of Field Hunters in 1906. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 7. Commemorative meeting at the Mausoleum at Lípa on the anniversary of the Battle of Hradec Králové in 1906. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 8. Saxon veterans of the War of 1866 at the monument of the Saxon army corps at Probluz in 1906, accompanied by the vice-chairman of the Hradec Králové Committee František Waldek. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

a comprehensive model for the functioning of heritage conservation was not actually created in interwar Czechoslovakia.¹⁸ It is little wonder, then, that Petr Štoncner termed the part played by voluntary societies in terms of preserving monuments irreplaceable.¹⁹

Strategy c) adaptation and submission to values

The ceremonial opening of the museum, however, was almost a proverbial swansong, with the clouds of the Second World War gathering over the Hradec Králové battlefield. Although the activity of the society did not come to an end in the initial years of the Nazi occupation, even though it had to expel from its ranks those members of non-Arian origin in 1940, conditions naturally deteriorated following the assassination of Acting Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich in 1942. The society had to subdue its activities, as indeed did other societies. Paradoxically, it was also thanks to this that its representatives were able to prove after liberation in 1945 that the society as a whole had not collaborated with the Nazis, having expelled those members that did. On 30 June 1945, the society announced to the police directorate that it would be expanding the area of its work to take in all war memorials within the Czechoslovak Republic. The plan, following on from the functioning of societal heritage conservation before 1918, was never brought to fruition, since the application submitted was rejected by the Provincial National Committee in Prague in 1948.²⁰

Strategy d) expertise and official conservation

In 1951, the *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém* was forced to bring its activities to a close under pressure from the communist state authorities. Encroachments on the operation of societies began not long after the communists came to power in 1948. Attention, however, was first directed at sports and hiking clubs, or at independent societies of veterans and resistance fighters. On 1 September 1950, the Ministry of the Interior ordered a nationwide review of societies, in that relations in that area did not match the new political, social, and economic conditions, given that societies were still carrying out activities whose statutes did not line up with the building of a people's democratic state or were in direct conflict with it. The ministry therefore expressed the intention of "simplifying society relations by liquidating societies which shatter society life and are a brake on the path to socialism, either because of their purely bourgeois nature or the incorrect ideological basis of their purpose".²¹ The clouds continued to gather with a decision of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic, a government resolution of 20 June 1950, effective from 1 January 1951, that care for military and peacetime monuments would come under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior.²² On 24 March 1951, the Ministry of National Defence even stated that "it is not interested in the onward duration of *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém*", seated in Hradec Králové".²³ Act No. 68/1951 Sb. on voluntary organisations and gatherings of 12 July 1951 became valid on 1 October of that year, cancelling the law of 1867 and essentially permitting only mass, regime organisations (in the vocabulary of the era). The existing societies that wished to be recognised had to prove how their activities contributed to building socialism and how far those activities conformed to the interests of the working people.²⁴ The leading representatives of the society, Chairman Dr. Miloš Kafka, Vice-Chairman Professor Josef Simon, and Managing Director Professor Otakar Jaroš, attempted to confront this unfortunate fate. According to the document of provenance of the Unitary National Committee for Hradec Králové of 15 May 1951, the leaders of the society contacted the Ministry of the Interior with a request that the activity of the society be maintained. The Ministry of the Interior naturally produced a statement that "care for military wartime and peacetime graves, cemeteries, memorials and monuments now pertains

directly to the Ministry of the Interior. Upkeep and records have been transferred to the local national committees ... In light of this, the onward duration of the society specified above is not justified. The maintenance work attended to so far by the voluntary work of the members of the society can be handled in a similar way using members of mass organisations who are interested in the matter."²⁵

On 16 May 1951, the leaders of *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém* were informed that care for the monuments on the battlefield of 1866, together with other related business, was being transferred to the Ministry of the Interior, which was delegating execution to the Local National Committees with the collaboration of the District National Committees. The leaders

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Bellum 1866 XXVI, 2017, pp. 31–41; Josef Šrámek, 'Inventář historické sbírky Válečného musea 1866 na Chlumu z let 1936–1954', Bellum 1866 XXV, 2016, pp. 128–146.

¹⁸ Extensively on this matter Petr Štoncner, 'Příspěvky k dějinám památkové péče v Československé republice v letech 1918–1938. Část 1. Vznik nové organizace státní památkové péče v roce 1918', *Zprávy památkové péče* LXIV, 2004, pp. 426–430; Petr Štoncner, 'Příspěvky k dějinám památkové péče v Československé republice v letech 1918–1938. Část 2. Organizační vývoj jednotlivých památkových úřadů', *Zprávy památkové péče* LXIV, 2004, pp. 539–545; Petr Štoncner, 'Příspěvky k dějinám památkové péče v Československé republice v letech 1918–1938. Část 3. Konzervátoři a další památkové instituce a spolky', *Zprávy památkové péče* LXV, 2005, pp. 58–62; Petr Štoncner, 'Příspěvky k dějinám památkové péče v Československé republice v letech 1918–1938. Část 4. Snahy o vydání památkového zákona', *Zprávy památkové péče* LXV, 2005, pp. 246–252; Petr Štoncner, 'Příspěvek k dějinám památkové péče v Československé republice v letech 1918–1938. Část 5. Státní subvence na opravy památek', *Zprávy památkové péče* LXVI, 2006, pp. 55–60.

¹⁹ Štoncner, 'Příspěvky k dějinám památkové péče v Československé republice v letech 1918–1938. Část 3. (note 18)', p. 62.

²⁰ Radek Teichman et al., *Komité 1866. Péče o válečné památky v průběhu staletí*, Hradec Králové 2003, p. 24.

²¹ Jitka Bílková, 'Konec spolkového života v Jičíně po roce 1948', *Marginalia Historica* III, 2012, pp. 16–25, in particular pp. 16–18.

²² Jaroslav Dvořák, 'Dokumentární příspěvek ke zrušení Komitétu roku 1951', *Bellum 1866* IV, 1995, pp. 74–85, quotation p. 77.

²³ Ibidem, p. 75.

²⁴ Bílková (note 21), p. 19.

²⁵ Dvořák, 'Dokumentární příspěvek ke zrušení Komitétu roku 1951' (note 22), p. 75.

of the society were therefore called on by the authorities to convene an extraordinary general meeting with the aim of dissolving the society.²⁶ Chairman of the society Miloslav Kafka and managing director Otakar Jaroš responded to the negative announcement on 21 May 1951 by announcing that the society would submit to the directive in as short a time as possible. They also stated, however, that in accordance with the instruction of the Regional National Committee in Hradec Králové of 10 September 1950, or the Central Action Committee in Prague, and according to an agreement with the education department of the Regional National Committee in Hradec Králové, the society committee intended to engage itself as a member of the subcommittee that would cooperate with the said education department at the Regional National Committee on the protection and preservation of historic monuments in the Hradec Králové region.²⁷ A question was addressed to the managing director of the society, Otakar Jaroš, on 25 June 1951 regarding how far the announced work on establishment of the subcommittee at the education department of the Regional National Committee in Hradec Králové had continued and when *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém* would be liquidated.²⁸ The officials were evidently not rushing with this. On 23 August 1951, the Regional National Committee in Hradec Králové received an instruction from the Ministry of the Interior that it was necessary, with regard to the fact that care for the battlefield at Hradec Králové was to be taken over by state administration, “it is therefore necessary to arrange for the assets of the society to also become national property, whose administration shall be entrusted to the competent national committee”. What is also significant in terms of the future development of the sides involved in caring for the battlefield is that the sphere of tasks carried out by the society which were to pass to the relevant national committee was expressly conditional on whether these were “necessary or desirable for the execution of the state-wide economic plan and compliant with the principles of building socialism”.²⁹ Under such continual pressure the management of *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém* gave up its battle and elected to disband a society whose roots stretched back to 1888, apparently voluntarily. Its activity came to an end at an extraordinary general meeting held on 16 November 1951, a two-thirds majority of the membership approving the motion put forward by chairman of the society Miloslav Kafka. The chairman

obviously stressed in his speech, according to the testimony of Otakar Jaroš, that the existing senior officials in the society would become members of the newly-established committee at the Regional National Committee in Hradec Králové, which had already been fundamentally approved by the Ministry of the Interior.³⁰ The society was thereafter erased from the register of societies³¹ and had to surrender all of its property (finances, museum building, guard house and viewing tower at Chlum, equipment, museum collection pieces, and two fortress guns).³² The activities of other societies came to a similar end, albeit the affiliated and geographically closest to the *Spolek pro udržování ossaria, pomníků a hrobů na bojišti jičínském z r. 1866* (Society for the Preservation of the Ossarium, Memorials, and Graves on the Jičín Battlefield of 1866) was able to draw out its dissolution until 1959, when it was closed in a measure of the department of internal affairs of the District National Committee in Jičín, in that its activity “does not help build socialism”.³³ Care for military graves passed to the Local National Committees, so any further activity of civic societies independent of the state was deemed meaningless by the state authorities. It was thus that the state assumed control of care for monuments from the Austro-Prussian War instead of the civic society sector during the 1950s through district monument conservationists.³⁴ In the Hradec Králové area it was Otakar Jaroš, paradoxically a former member of management at *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém*.³⁵

Strategy e) clubs and correspondence campaign

Despite the atmosphere of the time and the uneasy conditions, the foundations were laid in 1954 for the *Vlastivědný klub* (Local History Club) at the Museum of Zdeněk Nejedlý in Hradec Králové, which was later (in the 1960s) transformed into *Klub ochrany památek a přírody* (Preservation of Monuments and Nature Club) at the Culture Centre of the Revolutionary Union Movement in Hradec Králové. According to its statutes, the club presented itself as a free association of citizens “which unites a common interest, an effort to care for the preservation of public socialist property”, its primary mission being “the protection and preservation of cultural historical, artistic, and natural values”. In its activity, the club made reference to the preamble to Act No. 22 Sb. of 17.1.1958 and to a passage from the UNESCO proclamation of 1964.³⁶ Its chairman from 1972 onward was Diploma Engineer Václav Laštovička

Fig. 9. *Liebig's Mausoleum at Lípa, one of the oldest monuments on the Hradec Králové battlefield.*

Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 10. *Tableau of the officials of the Hradec Králové Comitee in 1911 at the end of Steinsky's era.*

Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 11. *The Battery of the Dead Monument established in 1893, still a symbol of remembrance of the fallen in the Battle of Hradec Králové in 1866.*

Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 12. *The area of the so-called Prussian Cemetery with a monument to the Prussian 1st Guards Infantry Division in the village of Chlum.*

Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 13. *Monument of the Austrian 11th Battalion of Field Jaegers and later moved monument of the Austrian Infantry Regiment No. 67 near the Svib forest. The unique photograph also probably shows one of the guards of the former battlefield in the early days of its monument protection.*

Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

(10 September 1900 – 3 January 1995),³⁷ who tirelessly addressed complaints surrounding the appalling state of monuments from the war in 1866 at all possible competent places, and in the press.³⁸ This naturally

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²⁶ Ibidem, p. 77.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 76.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 77.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 80.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 84.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 85.

³² Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové, Militaria fund, accompanying documentation, Inventář historické sbírky válečného musea na Chlumu, old sign. A41; Dvořák, ‘Dokumentární příspěvek ke zrušení Komitétu roku 1951’ (note 22), pp. 81–82.

³³ Cf. Bílková (note 21), pp. 21–22.

³⁴ Cf. on genesis, role and functioning Štoncer, ‘Příspěvy k dějinám památkové péče v Československé republice v letech 1918–1938. Část 3. (note 18), pp. 58–59.

³⁵ Bohumil Poláček, ‘Z historie Spolku pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém z r. 1866’, in Jiří Polák (ed), *Rakousko-pruská válka ve světle rozhoďujícího střetnutí*. 125. výročí bitvy u Hradce Králové, Hradec Králové 1991, pp. 26–29, quotation p. 28.

³⁶ Archiv Komitétu pro udržování památek z války roku 1866, Pozůstalost Bohumila Poláčka, Zápis Klubu ochrany přírody a památek v Hradci Králové, Rok 1975, unsigned, unpagged.

³⁷ Bohumil Poláček, ‘Ohlédnutí za pětiletým působením obnoveného Komitétu 1866’, *Bellum 1866* IV, 1995, pp. 53–58, in particular pp. 57–58.

³⁸ Archiv Komitétu 1866 (note 36), Rok 1969–1972, Rok 1976–1982, 1984–1985.



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Královéhradecké bojiště z r. 1866.
Chlum: Pomník ev. č. 273 „Baterie hrdých“
rak. jízdní baterie č. 6. 7–VII. 881. pl.

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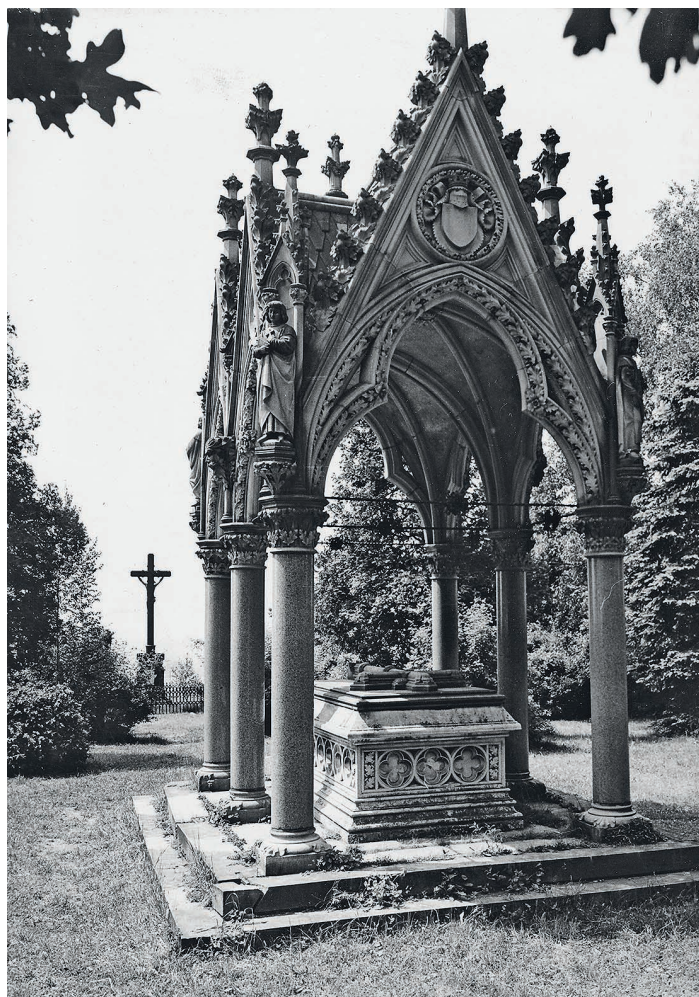
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Fig. 14. *The monument of the Austrian Infantry Regiment No. 4 in the village of Rozběvice. Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové.*

Fig. 15. *The Ossarium, established in 1899 and rebuilt in 1936, for the remains of the fallen of 1866 in the village of Chlum. Since 1964 the building has been a protected monument. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.*

Fig. 16. *The lookout tower, built in 1899, became an expression of the transformation of the former battlefield into a conservation area and tourist destination. Josef Šrámek's private archive.*

of the conflict (the last reverent gathering at the battlefield, with a requiem mass no less, had come on 3 July 1951),⁴⁰ albeit an exhibition in the Regional Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové was eventually held, and even visited by the Austrian ambassador.⁴¹ This was an exceptional event which was not repeated. After August 1968, in the words of eyewitness Bohumil Poláček, “the battlefield is becoming undesirable. Efforts are being made to wipe it from human memory and gradually liquidate it.”⁴² More than ever before, real care for monuments from

brought attention to him, although the “halo” he had as a member of Svoboda’s Army and his military service opened more doors for him than was common at the time in comparison with normal people.

Strategy f), the attractiveness of the anniversary and attention from abroad

Not even after this was the issue of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 a bed of roses.³⁹ In 1966, the 100th anniversary of the Austro-Prussian War, it was forbidden to organise a public remembrance of the victims

■ Footnotes

39 Pavel Bělina, *Ve stínu ideologie: Válka roku 1866 v českém předlistopadovém dějepisectví*, in: Jiří Hutečka – Josef Šrámek et al., *Mlhy na Chlumu. Prusko-rakouská válka v optice moderní historiografie*, Hradec Králové 2018, pp. 15–20.

40 Dvořák, ‘Dokumentární příspěvek ke zrušení Komitétu roku 1951’ (note 22), pp. 78–79.

41 Brůha et al. (note 12), p. 27.

42 Poláček, ‘Z historie Spolku pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém z r. 1866’ (note 35), p. 29.

the war of 1866 was moving into the twilight and was almost akin to “dissent”.⁴³

Strategy g) work teams and self-help

One prominent personality at *Klub ochrany památek a přírody* alongside the aforementioned Václav Laštovička was Bohumil Poláček (13 April 1943 – 9 June 2012).⁴⁴ He entered the ranks of the club in 1969 and became a central figure in the recording and documentation of monuments from the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and making repairs to them, minor and more extensive, in the form of work teams.⁴⁵ It was Poláček who at the beginning of 1973 became a colleague of the 1866 War Memorial grounds in Chlum, at the recommendation of regional conservationist Otakar Jaroš.⁴⁶ The notional “Sixty-six war” section was reinforced in 1982 by the arrival of Jaroslav Dvořák (born 1959) and in 1986 by Miroslav Vycpálek (1 December 1950 – 21 January 2012), who had from 1979 been systematically mapping out and recording the monuments on individual battlefield in East Bohemia as the basis of his dissertation.⁴⁷ The club was also involved in many excursions to individual battlefield at that time and organised talks.⁴⁸ Although the activity of the club was diverse indeed, not concentrating solely on the war of 1866, care for the monuments from that war were the notional thread that ran through its work. Between 1970 and 1989, the group around Bohumil Poláček and Václav Laštovička repaired a considerable number of monuments at various sites of the expansive Hradec Králové battlefield, either with their own hands or in collaboration with other institutions, and did not hesitate to intervene to their benefit at the competent places or denounce shortcomings and amateurish pseudo-renovation. The situation was not disastrous everywhere; in 1971, for example, the club acknowledged the exemplary treatment of memorials from the war in 1866 and the planting of flowers in the village of Horní Příim and therefore addressed its thanks to the Local National Committee, in that “*it is not like this everywhere, in many places we come across indifference to monuments, even vandalism*”, whereas “*the condition of the memorials in Horní Příim might act as an example to surrounding towns and villages*”.⁵⁰ The club’s interest in the Hradec Králové battlefield of 1866 is clear from a document sent after an excursion on 1 July 1972 to the District National Committee in Hradec Králové and to management of the 1866 battlefield grounds in Chlum. Václav Laštovička and Bohumil Poláček described the condition

of the battlefield with which they had the opportunity to familiarise themselves in relative detail on behalf of the club, over almost three pages. They mentioned relative details, such as the illegibility of the inscriptions on several memorials, the need to navigate the surroundings of the monuments, the inappropriate composition of tree stumps and deadwood next to them, the damage to and need to rehabilitate the pens around the monument, commenting on a memorial plaque removed when repairing a building which should be placed in an more appropriate location, and more serious problems, such as the random relocation of memorials from their original, authentic position, the theft of inscription plaques, and cases of physical damage to the memorials (including fresh damage caused by an axe), as well as all unprofessional-to-amateurish interventions in an attempt to repair the damaged monument. What is important is that the complaints made were not only about the hard-to-access memorials on the edge of the battlefield, but about “first line” monuments such as the artistically valuable memorial of the Austrian Deutschmeisters in Rozběříce, in the centre of the town, or the no-less-significant memorial to Austrian Field Jaegers, no. 8 at Svíb Forest. By contrast, the condition of the memorial on the grave of Austrian Generalmajor Poschacher von Poschach at the church in Chlum was according to Laštovička and Poláček requiring only routine maintenance – the conservation of a rusty chain, filling in cracks in the base, and regular trimming of decorative growth. The military cemetery in Chlum was even found to be carefully maintained, with the grass having been cut, in contrast to previous years, which the writers saw as being a clear step forward. The need for more significant repairs was mentioned for only one of the local memorials. In conclusion, Laštovička and Poláček wrote some words that are a valid characteristic of the Hradec Králové battlefield to this day: “*The much-visited site of the battle of 1866 is a significant cultural monument in Hradec Králové. Its virtues are its condition, that most of the memorials, marked pits and graves are scattered all over the grounds in the places of clashes and burials, which makes an overview of the development and operations of the battle on the ground all the easier*.”⁵¹ Members of the club endeavoured to proceed in their activities in the awareness and according to the instructions of management of the Battle of Chlum 1866 Memorial. They concentrated their efforts, although not exclusively, on monuments to the war of 1866 in the anniversary

year of 1976.⁵² In 1979, however, Laštovička and Poláček pointed to the dilapidation of memorials to 1866 in a number of places on the Hradec Králové battlefield on behalf of the club, stating that “*the assistance which the club is offering is received with hesitation, indecisively, or with silence*”.⁵³ The club therefore focused its attention between 1981 and 1983, for example, on having the Hradec Králové battlefield of 1866 entered in the State Register of Immovable Cultural Monuments, addressing the competent authorities to this end.⁵⁴

Strategy h) military history clubs and re-enactment

It was at the beginning of the 1970s and during the 1980s that the Hradec Králové battlefield of 1866 also began attracting members of newly founded military history clubs from Trutnov, Josefov, Brno, Ostrava, and Kladno.⁵⁵ This meant that another specific group

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⁴³ This fact limits the underpinning of care for the monuments on the battlefield of 1866 in the way of traditional written sources and we must build on the testimonies of the witnesses still living. The effort to capture recollections of the events of 1951–1989 was also motivated by work on an anniversary publication to mark 130 years of the existence of *Komité pro udržování památek z války roku 1866*, see Barus et al. (note 15).

⁴⁴ Josef Komárek, ‘Zemřel Bohumil Poláček (*13. 4. 1943, †9. 6. 2012)’, *Bellum 1866* XXII, 2013, pp. 123–124.

⁴⁵ Archiv Komitétu 1866 (note 36), Rok 1969, 1971.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, Rok 1973.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, Rok 1986. Cf. Miroslav Bratrych, ‘Vzpomínka na Miroslava Vycpálka (Smuteční řeč pronesená na obřadu v Praze – Strašnicích dne 30. 1. 2012)’, *Bellum 1866* XXI, 2012, pp. 104–105. For more on Vycpálek’s life and work see Jaroslav Dvořák, ‘PaedDr. Miroslav Vycpálek a jeho přínos k dokumentaci památek z války 1866’, in: Jaroslav Dvořák, *Lexikon pruských důstojníků padlých roku 1866*. Hradec Králové 2014, pp. 216–246.

⁴⁸ Archiv Komitétu 1866 (note 36), Rok 1969–1989.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, Rok 1970–1989.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, Rok 1971.

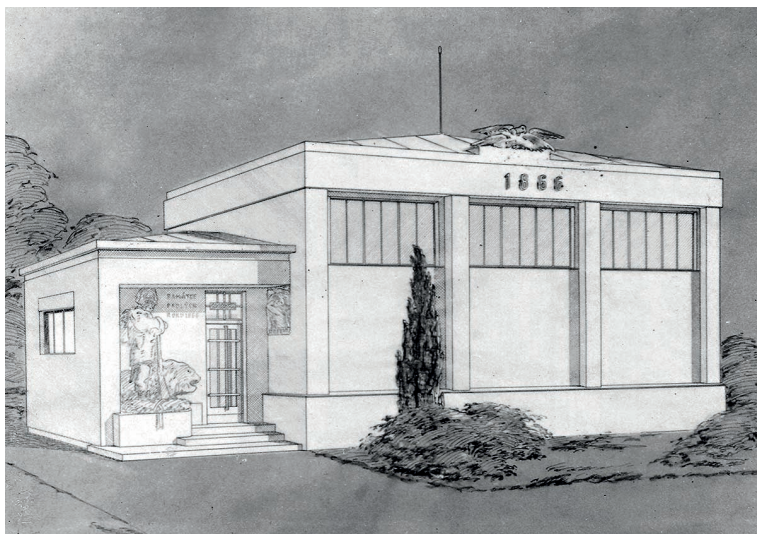
⁵¹ Ibidem, Rok 1972.

⁵² Ibidem, Rok 1976.

⁵³ Ibidem, Rok 1979.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, Rok 1981–1983.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, Rok 1980. Cf. Václav Řepa, *Co si ještě pamatuju o tom, co bylo, když jsme byli, pro ty, co budou, až my nebudem*, (unpublished manuscript, available in the library of the Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové, sign. KI 6832), Frýdek-Místek 2004. For the development of the phenomenon of a specific subculture cf. Jaroslav Krupka, *Český historický šerm. Ze suterénu až na hladiny oceánů*, Brno 2014; for a specific example see



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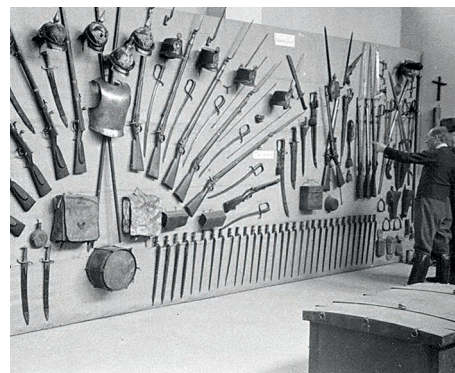
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Fig. 17. Preparatory drawing of the new war museum at Chlum from 1935. Jaroslav Dvořák's private archive.

Fig. 18. The former battlefield near Hradec Králové as a mid-20th century tourist destination with an inn, lookout tower and museum. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 19. The oldest exposition of the War of 1866 Museum at Chlum, nationalized in the 1950s. Jaroslav Dvořák's private archive.

crystallised outside the official structure, or on the edges of that structure, which kept awareness of the wartime events of 1866 alive. These efforts, made by “enthusiastic amateurs” (in the positive sense of the word) were also recently acclaimed by doyens of expert historiography of the Austro-Prussian War Pavel Bělina and Josef Fučík.⁵⁶ Any attempts at reverent remembrance of those who fell in the Austro-Prussian War were continually rebuffed and even actively suppressed by state authorities. Such an unauthorised gathering was broken up in 1983 and 1985, for example. It was also in those years that the paradoxical situation arose in which Public Security (VB, the regular police force of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic) and State Security (StB, the secret police force) monitored and sometimes even prevented (primarily at the time of the anniversary of the Battle of Hradec Králové) even a simple visit to the museum in Chlum, even though it was an official cultural monument,



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so as to prevent the gathering of “anti-state elements”. State authorities were fortified in this reaction by the fact that a report on one unofficial reverent gathering was broadcast by Austrian state television in 1982.⁵⁷ Bohumil Poláček, as a witness, summed up the conditions by saying that the memorial event in Chlum had since 1982 been “under the constant control of the StB, those participating being checked, arrested, and intimidated in various ways”. He also referred to the paradoxical situation that whereas the regime tolerated contemporary military uniforms at memorial events for the Battle of Slavkov, prohibition was strictly applied to similar gatherings in Hradec Králové.⁵⁸ In spite of this, excursions to the battlefield on the anniversary date of 3 July appear in preserved club programmes every year.⁵⁹

Counterstrategies

Irrespective of this commendable activity, which did not merely concern monuments to the Austro-Prussian War and was even commended in the press,⁶⁰ the activity of the club was repeatedly impeded and prohibited, with

Footnotes

Jakub Samek, ‘Bitva u Slavkova v současném re-enactmentu’, *Sborník Muzea Brněnska* 2011, Předklášeří 2011, pp. 85–98.

⁵⁶ Pavel Bělina – Vojtěch Kessler, ‘Nebýt nadšených „amatérů“, vypadla by válka roku 1866 z obecného povědomí. Rozhovor s Pavlem Bělinou (nejen) o prusko-rakouské válce’, *Dějiny a současnost* XXXVIII, 2016, pp. 23–25; Josef Fučík, ‘Hradec Králové 2006 – výzvy a zamyšlení’, *Bellum* 1866 XV, 2006, pp. 58–66.

⁵⁷ Brůha et al. (note 12), p. 28. Unique film footage of commemorative events in Chlum is available at the Youtube profile Projekt Königgratz 1866, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GMvIBi_HTE, searched 17. 4. 2021.

⁵⁸ Archiv Komitétu 1866 (note 36), Rok 1988.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, Rok 1977–1989.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, Rok 1979.



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the club changing its name and headquarters on several occasions on account of disputes with the “organiser”,⁶¹ while its leading representatives were followed and investigated by state authorities. In 1971, for example, members of the club faced accusations that their activities were “lacking in any Marxist-Leninist concept”, and for this reason the future operation of the club was deemed undesirable. Another attack came in 1976, when a warning was addressed by the Department of Culture at the East Bohemian Regional National Committee to the District Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia that the “club has a negative scope of activity. It carries out renovation and restoration work that encroaches on the district of Jičín, Pardubice, Rychnov n. K., and Ústí n. O. It emerges from what we know so far that the Club focused mainly on church sculptures, the historic centre of the city of Hradec Králové, and the battlefield in Chlum.” The Department of Culture at the East Bohemian Regional

Fig. 20. The building of the War of 1866 Museum at Chlum in the 1970s. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 21. The central area of the memorial zone of the former battlefield of 1866 near Hradec Králové in the 1970s. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 22. Key figures in the preservation of War of 1866 monuments in East Bohemia before 1989, left standing Václav Laštovička (1900–1995), right standing Bohumil Poláček (1943–2012). Archives of the Committee for the Preservation of Monuments from the War of 1866.

National Committee also stated that collaboration had begun with the district department of Public Security for the purpose of exchanging information about the club at issue. The following year saw members of the club attract the attention of Public Security, and they were investigated on suspicion of “connection to imperialist powers”.⁶² The club, whose activity was banned in Hradec Králové at the end of November 1971, had to relocate to Pardubice, before it was banned from there too on account of its work. The club found a new organiser for a while in the Culture and Relaxation Park in Hradec Králové.⁶³ Still, however, state authorities acted against its members, but was nevertheless unable to liquidate the club, and its members operated under the name of *Kolektiv ochrany životního prostředí* (Conservation of the Environment Group) from 1977 under the auspices of the ROH Culture Centre at the Závody Vítězného února engineering company in Hradec Králové.⁶⁴ The repression continued, though; the authorities again terminated the public activity of *Kolektiv ochrany životního prostředí*, and its members were left to look for a new organiser, finding one in the ROH Works Club at Závody Vítězného února in Hradec Králové. This was accompanied by a new name, this time *Klub přátel přírody a historických památek* (Friends of Nature and Historic Monuments) at ROH Culture Centre at Závody Vítězného února in Hradec Králové. According to materials from 1978, the declared activity of the club included: 1. Organising those interested in nature and historic monuments, in doing so

Footnotes

⁶¹ Ibidem, Rok 1971–1972.

⁶² Poláček, ‘Z historie Spolku pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém z r. 1866’ (note 35), p. 29.

⁶³ Archiv Komitétu 1866 (note 36), Rok 1969, 1971–1974, 1976.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, Rok 1977.



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Fig. 23. Václav Laštovička supervising the relocation of the monument of the Austrian Infantry Regiment No. 46 in the village of Chlum on 6 November 1975. Archive of the Committee for the Preservation of Monuments from the War of 1866.

Fig. 24. Václav Laštovička at the memorial to the fallen in the Prusso-Austrian War in the village of Dobalice during a group walk to the battlefield on 3 July 1984. Jaroslav Dvořák's private archive.

contributing to expedient and socially beneficial use of free time among young people and workers. 2. To train and educate its members expertly, theoretically, and practically based on scientific opinion and in the spirit of the cultural policy of the Czechoslovak state. 3. To discover and study nature and historic monuments, survey them, work on scientific evaluation, protection, and use. 4. Gather and store knowledge from all conservation groups, particularly relating to the monuments of the Czechoslovak Republic. 5. To help the organisations of state conservation of nature and monuments through its activities and the results of its work. 6. To contribute toward protecting the richness of monuments, spread ideas of protecting the living and natural environment. 7. To publicise and popularise the results of its work. 8. To cooperate with other clubs. 9. To cooperate with foreign organisations and in doing so contribute to peaceful coexistence and cooperation among nations. 10. To defend the interests of its organisation in all aspects of its activity and for the benefit of society as a whole.⁶⁵ Clearly these principles aroused suspicion within the regime, particularly when the society did not restrict its cooperation to related societies such as Klub Za starou Prahu (Club for Old Prague), Klub přátel Pardubicka (Friends of Pardubice Club) or Klub pro udržování čsl. opevnění v Orlických horách z let 1936-1939 (Club for the Preservation of Czechoslovak Fortifications in the Orlické Mountains from 1936–1939) and when its leadership considered the possibility of cooperation with the International Council of Monuments and Cities – Czechoslovak committee – in 1981.⁶⁶ Another ban on activity followed in 1980, only for the “society” to be taken up by ROH Culture Centre at Královopolská strojírna engineering works in Brno, again under a new name – Skupina ochrany životního prostředí v Hradci Králové (Group for Conservation of the Environment in Hradec Králové). The preservationists of monuments in East Bohemia from 1866 operated in this way until 1983, when their activity was banned again. Bohumil Poláček became the focus of StB attention in 1983, and one year later Václav Laštovička had to appear before the StB Investigation Department, where an official ban was imposed on the activity of Klub na ochranu památek a přírody v Hradci Králové. Moreover, Laštovička and Poláček were banned from all management activity and were given a procurator's warning. It was time to work illegally.⁶⁷ Bohumil Poláček was again interrogated by State Security in 1985. According to an eyewitness, pressure

was put on him with the threat of a charge of illegal, and therefore anti-state, activity, for which there was a long sentence. State Security also monitored him at his place of work. The StB naturally exerted pressure on other members of the former club, often having an impact on their employment.⁶⁸

In 1984, this was repeatedly a matter of members of the club joining the *Vlastivědný klub* (Local History Club) at the Regional Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové, established by proclamation. Although around 50 members submitted an application in December of the same year, a founding meeting, announced by management of the regional museum for March 1985, was never held, whereupon the club acted as an unofficial group of friends interested in nature and monuments at the recommendation of the then-director of the museum. We can read, from a number of period entries, both the hope and the disappointment of the management of the former club, as well as a certain understanding in the knowledge that the establishment of such a civic society focusing of heritage conservation was a complex matter, not simply with regard to scientific erudition and organisational abilities, but “last but not least a certain dose of civil courage”.⁶⁹ A relatively unexpected turn of events came in 1986, of course, when State Security recognised the futility of bans and persecution and chose a different tactic, when it recommended to the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia that the onward activity of those around Laštovička and Poláček be played out under party and methodical control. The director of the Regional Museum in Hradec Králové was therefore provided with the instruction to govern the activity of the former club and prevent the spread of criticism of state authorities. So it was that *Vlastivědný klub* (Local History Club) was born at the Regional Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové, under the name of which activities continued until the end of 1989. Those activities, however, were monitored – all written documents, for example, had to pass through the museum filing room and had to be approved by the organiser.⁷⁰ Even this, though, was a manifest

Footnotes

65 Ibidem, Rok 1978.

66 Ibidem, Rok 1979–1981.

67 Ibidem, Rok 1980–1983.

68 Ibidem, Rok 1983–1985.

69 Ibidem, Rok 1984–1985.

70 Ibidem, Rok 1986–1989.

Fig. 25. The War Museum 1866 at Chlum on the centenary of the Battle of Hradec Králové on 3 July 1966. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

Fig. 26. Visitors to the battlefield area near Hradec Králové on the anniversary day of 3 July 1966. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

improvement on the previous situation, allowing at least an elementary existence on legal foundations. One separate subchapter is the matter of relations with the management of Memorial of the Battle of 1866 in Chlum. The new director of the memorial, Mr. Hrdý, banned Bohumil Poláček from working on the upkeep of the memorials on the battlefield and from even entering the 1866 grounds in 1980. The society attempted to defend itself against the decision by stating that its members had repaired around 35 memorials within the space of 10 years and that there had never been any complaints about their work – quite the contrary in fact – and it was mentioned that repairs had always been carried out with the knowledge and consent of memorial management. Conservationists of monuments from the war of 1866 endeavoured to appeal that the season was coming to its climax, but that “woefully few” adjustments had been made to the memorials, “and with significant errors”, whereby “it is clear that supervision of preservation work on memorials on the battlefield of 1866 is insufficiently secured and it would therefore be advisable to either name a new military conservationist and/or to form a committee at the district conservation office from the ranks of civilian experts on the 1866 battlefield”. Members thereafter defended themselves against Krajské středisko státní památkové péče a ochrany přírody v Pardubicích (Regional Centre of State Heritage Conservation and the Conservation of Nature in Pardubice) by saying that it was the duty of contemporaries to maintain a monument to the victims of the war of 1866 for future generations too, as a witness to the cruelty of war, and not to allow the “arbitrary and unjustified relocation of memorials”. Whereby in their view, “the persecution of civic preservation organisations and the preclusion of experts on the battlefield from conservation activities undoubtedly does not help preserve the memory of wartime events in our land. (...) Surveys carried out in the individual sections of the battlefield show that most of the memorials are dilapidated ... (...) There is an expression of inability to work with the public, local history and sporting organisations of



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people ...” Poláček and Laštovička also tried to support their appeal with the relevant legal rule: “According to Act No. 22 of 17 April 1958 on cultural monuments, not the District National Committee and the people alone (...) are responsible for the cultural condition of memorials on the battlefield; it is the duty of everyone to help the preservation of monuments.”⁷¹ One of the biggest threats that the commemorative site of the Hradec Králové battlefield from 1866 faced between 1951 and 1989 was the plan to build a strategic fuel depot here not long before the fall of the regime,⁷² in the very heart of Svěb Forest, the symbolic site of one of the biggest clashes

of the Battle of Hradec Králové, and therefore a site that held a large number of graves and memorials. There was much resistance to the plan among broad social strata, and the warehouse was eventually built in Cerekvice nad Bystřicí. The originally suggested site of Svěb Forest was then to have been used as

Footnotes

⁷¹ Ibidem, Rok 1980.

⁷² Jaroslav Dvořák – Jiří Synek, ‘Před 25 lety byl obnoven Komitét 1866’, *Bellum 1866 XXIV*, 2015, pp. 5–25, in particular pp. 17–18; Blažek (note 7), pp. 57–63, in particular pp. 59.



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a dump for municipal waste for the district of Hradec Králové. The waste dump was to have been created in the deep ravine beneath a memorial to the 30th battalion of Field Jaegers on the sites of one of the largest concentrations of pit graves. The idea, promoted by the Department of Building and Planning at the District National Committee in Hradec Králové, never came to pass. Neither did the communist regime manage to carry out its declared intention of building houses on the field between the village of Chlum and the Prussian Cemetery in 1987.⁷³ These “defensive activities” were made formally easier by the fact that on 24 November 1981 the District National Committee in Hradec Králové declared the area of the battlefield at Hradec Králové an area of rest (albeit to a limited extent), which entailed a certain degree of monument preservation and the opportunity to appeal its principles.⁷⁴ The status of fully-fledged protected monument zone, however, did not come until 1996. This year, symbolically two days before the anniversary of the battle, i.e. on 1 July, the entire territory of the battlefield, including about 40 municipalities and their parts, became a landscape conservation area.⁷⁵ Thus, the long process of transforming the battlefield from a Prusso-Austrian war memorial into a commemorative monument area, lasting about a century, was finally completed.

The renaissance of 1989.

The fall of the communist regime at the end of 1989, however, prepared the ground for the restoration of heritage conservation of

wartime graves from 1866. The aforementioned Miroslav Vycpálek came up with the idea of reviving *Spolek pro udržování válečných památek na bojišti královéhradeckém* in November 1989 itself. Another step was taken on 8 December 1989, when a preparatory committee met in Vycpálek’s flat in Prague, the committee including Vycpálek himself and his friends Jaroslav Dvořák and Bohumil Poláček. The meeting resulted in rough outlines of sketched statutes of the future society, drawing on the statutes from the times of the founder of the pre-war Committee in Hradec Králové commander Jan Nepomuk Steinský from 1891. This closed the notional circle. Another step came with the publication of a public call about the foundation of *Spolek pro udržování památek z války roku 1866*, addressed specifically to those interested in military history and printed in the daily press alike. The name of the future society was adjusted at the beginning of 1990 to *Komitét pro udržování památek z války roku 1866*, further underlining ideological continuity with the legacy of Steinský the one-armed commander. The founding general meeting of the society, numbering 57 members at that time, was then held on 31 March 1990 in the U Polních myslivců pub in Chlum, which dates back to the time before 1900. The restoration of *Komitét pro udržování památek z války roku 1866* culminated on 20 April 1990 with the decision of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czechoslovak Republic to approve the society’s statutes.⁷⁶

Fig. 27. Foreign visitors to the Hradec Králové battlefield on the occasion of the centenary of the Battle of Hradec Králové on 3 July 1966 at the monument of the Austrian 8th Battalion of Field Jaegers at the foot of the Svib forest. Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové.

However, the *Komitét* established itself in the new, hitherto unknown conditions of market liberalisation and commercialisation. It was obvious that none of the strategies tried so far could be successfully applied in the new conditions. To describe the ways in which the organisation (and the associated traditions of battle and battlefield heritage care) has dealt and is still dealing with this situation would be beyond the chronological scope of the paper. It is also quite obvious that the *Komitét* must now use new strategies for its activities, different from those presented in this article. As we have shown, the years 1948–1989 were crucial for this battlefield memorial zone near Hradec Králové. The activities of the *Komitét* in the (semi-)illegal regime, and the professional and personal insertion of former members within the more or less official structures of legal conservation, generated specific survival strategies, which we have chronologically divided and proposed an appropriate typology.

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■ Footnotes

⁷³ Ibidem, Rok 1987, 1989.

⁷⁴ Ibidem, Rok 1981.

⁷⁵ Viz Vyhláška Ministerstva kultury ČR č. 208/1996 Sb. Compare Blažek (note 7), pp. 56–63.

⁷⁶ Dvořák – Synek (note 72), pp. 5–25, in particular pp. 17–25.

⁷⁷ Cf. Martin Barus et al. (note 15), pp. 85–93.