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**MEMORY OF LANDSCAPE AND WASTE.
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF THE MILITARY INTERVENTION
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN AUGUST 1968 ACCORDING TO THE CASE
OF THE CHRUDIM REGION**

Abstract: The paper focuses on hitherto unknown evidence of the presence of invasion forces from the period of the so-called Prague Spring (1968) preserved in a forest area in the southern part of the Chrudim Region (Eastern Bohemia, Czech Republic). In the forest area we found traces of 14 camps of the Polish army comprising visible trenches and foxholes for heavy equipment and men. Field remains are complemented by garbage in the form of cans and small parts of military equipment.

Keywords: archaeology of contemporary past, archaeology of conflicts, non-destructive surface survey, military trenches, Prague Spring 1968

Received: 23.09.2019 **Revised:** 10.10.2019 **Accepted:** 22.10.2019

Citation: Musil J. 2019. *Memory of Landscape and Waste. Archaeological Evidence of the Military Intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 According to the Case of the Chrudim Region*. "Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae" 32, 225-235, DOI 10.23858/FAH32.2019.015

Introduction

One of the most sensitive chapters of recent Czech history is the so-called Prague Spring¹ of 1968. The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia² destroyed hopes of reforming Socialism in Czechoslovakia. This event marked one whole generation. While photographs of Soviet tanks spread throughout the world and entered the public's subconscious, the material remains of the August invasion are virtually unknown. In this paper we focus on unknown material evidence of the presence of invasion forces from 1968. The extensive forest areas of the southern part of the Chrudim Region (East Bohemia, Czech Republic) have preserved a number of terrain traces of human activity, which can be dated to a wide time horizon from prehistoric times

to the recent past. Especially features from the recent past are not adequately protected from the point of view of current legislation. Large and deep features cause problems in forestry management and therefore disappear very quickly. Field fortifications of the second half of the 20th century situated outside military training areas also occupy a unique position in this issue.³ Some of these features are explored by archaeology of contemporary past,⁴ or by more attractive and dynamically developing conflict archaeology.⁵ This group also includes military camps from 1968 documented in forest areas between Heřmanův Městec, Skuteč and Hlinsko (Fig. 1).⁶

Historical Background

A number of publications have been devoted to the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968.⁷ The invasion

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¹ The Prague Spring was a period of political liberalization in Czechoslovakia. It began on 5 January 1968, when reformist A. Dubček was elected as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

² Operation Danube was a joint invasion of Czechoslovakia by five Warsaw Pact countries – the Soviet Union, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany and Hungary – on the night of 20-21 August 1968.

³ Dubánek et al. 2008; Musil and Netolický 2014, Fig. 5; Rak et al. 2014, 42-61; Musil and Netolický 2017.

⁴ Vařeka 2013.

⁵ Cf. Morris 2003; Schofield 2003; Schofield 2005; Rak 2013.

⁶ Musil and Netolický 2017.

⁷ E.g. Wenzke 1995; Williams 1997; Maiorov 1998; Pajórek 1998; Fes'kov et al. 2004; Kamiński 2004; Povolný 2008; Povolný 2010.

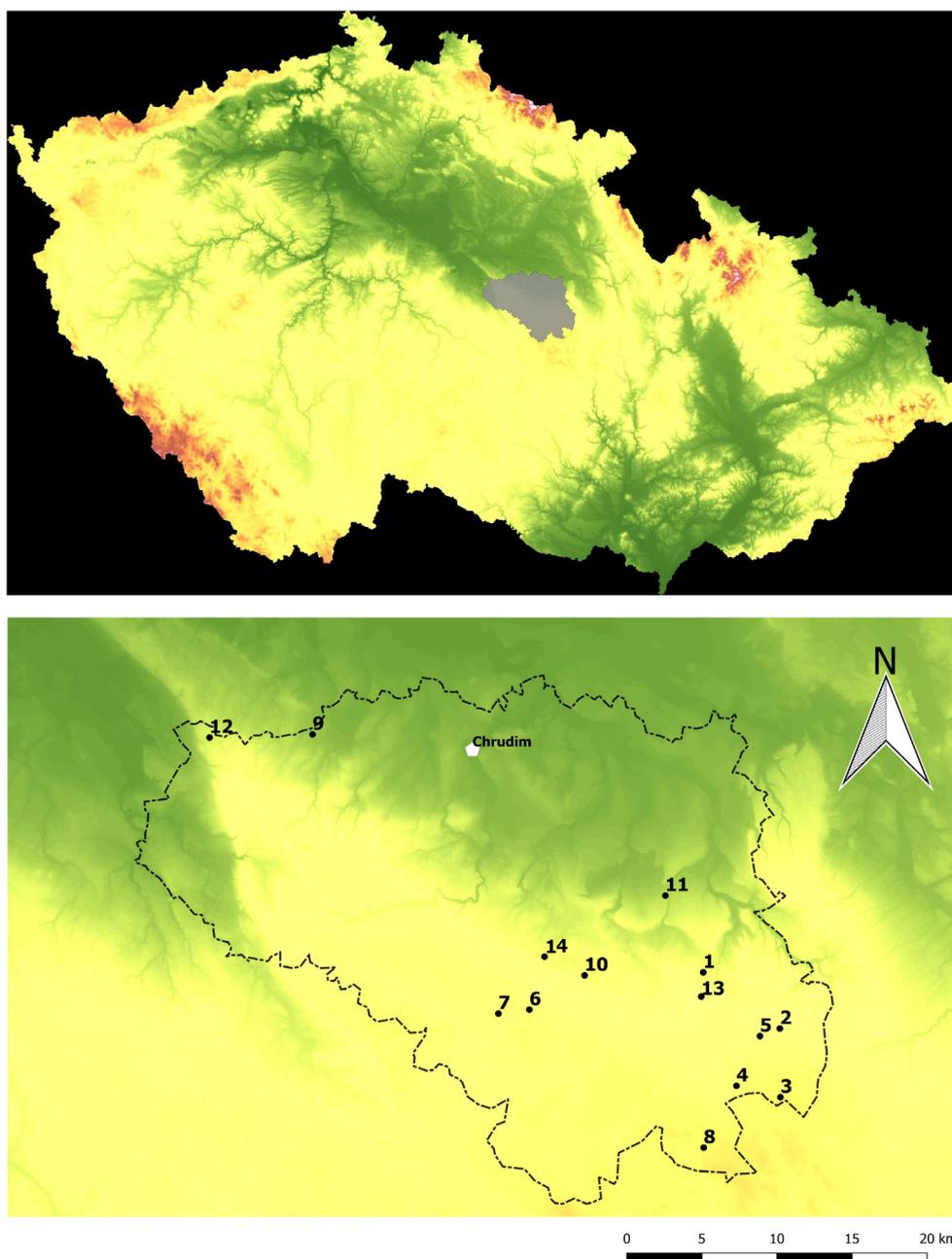


Fig. 1. Localization of well-known Polish Army encampments in Chrudim District, 1968. 1. Předhradí, 2. Proseč u Skutče, 3. Františky, 4. Rychnov, 5. Česká Rybná, 6. Forest area between Srní and Včelákov, 7. Petrkov, 8. Svatouch, 9. Heřmanův Městec, 10. Tisovec, 11. Hroubovice, 12. Nový Dvůr, 13. Lešany, 14. Majlant-Dachovské Paseky. Elaborated by J. Musil.

began by broadcasting the code signal “VLTAVA - 666” on 20 August 1968 at 10.15 pm (CET). Invasion forces entered Czechoslovakia after previous advance security precautions.⁸ The occupation of Eastern Bohemia was allotted to the 10th and 11th Panzer Divisions of the Polish 2nd army.⁹ Entry to Czech territory was provided by

⁸ Povolný 2008, 97-104.

⁹ The Polish 2nd Army under the command of Brigadier General Florian Siwicki represented part of the army’s “Nord” Group. The main headquarters was created in Hradec Králové – cf. Pa-jórek 1998; Kamiński 2004.

a diversified reconnaissance 1st Independent Strike Battalion under command of Lieutenant Colonel T. Wandzel in cooperation with a Polish border defence corps, especially from the 5th Sudeten Brigade Border Defence Corps.¹⁰ By 11.00 pm, the 11th Panzer Division had moved out of the starting area Chojnów – Złotoryja – Jawor into two entrance areas: 1. Łubawka (Złotoryja – Kamień Góra) a 2. Mieroszów (Jawór – Świebodzice). From the entrance area Mieroszów the Polish units

¹⁰ Povolný 2008, 98, 116.

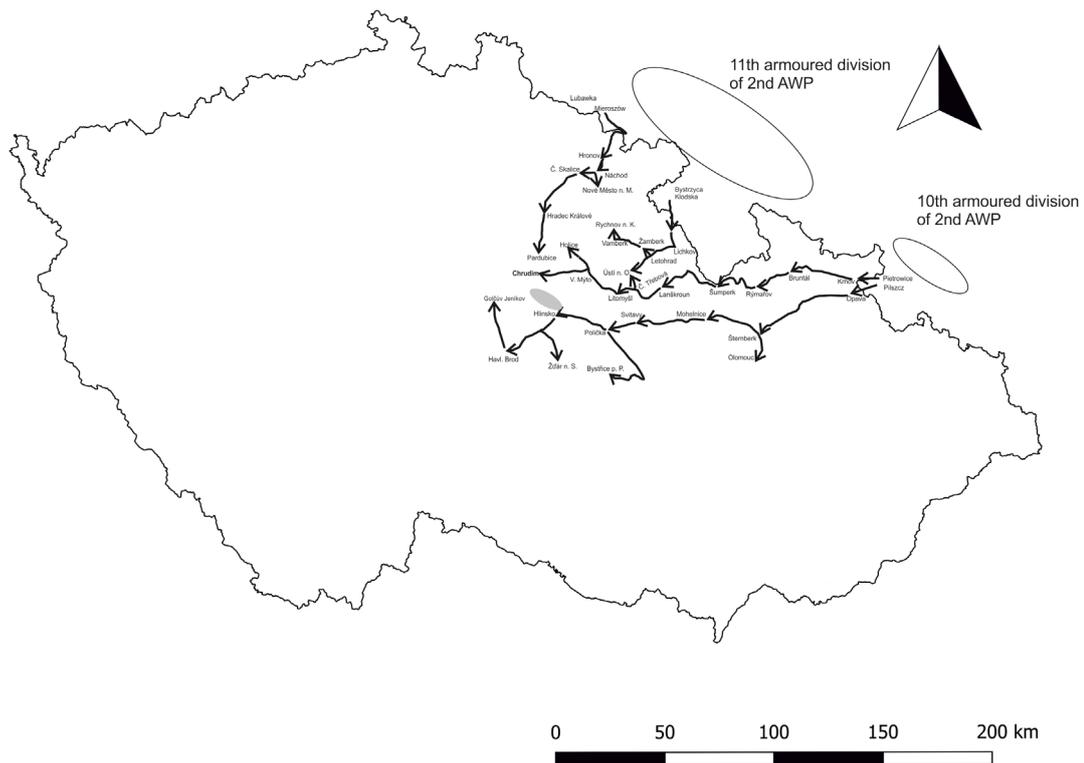


Fig. 2. The advance of the Polish Army into East Bohemia before 21 August 1968. Drawn by J. Musil according to D. Povolný 2008.

then headed to East Bohemia along the route Hronov – Náchod – Česká Skalice – Hradec Králové – Pardubice. The advancing units were to create military headquarters in Přelouč, Jaroměř, Hradec Králové and Pardubice.¹¹ The 10th Panzer Division had moved out of the starting area Opole – Niemodlin – Biała – Krapkowice into two entrance areas: 1. Piotrowice (Biała – Głubczyce) and 2. Pilszcz (Głogówek – Baborów). From the entrance area Piotrowice the Polish units then headed to East Bohemia along the route Krnov – Bruntál – Rýmařov – Šumperk – Lanškroun – Litomyšl – Chrudim with lateral process axes to Ústí nad Orlicí, Žamberk a Holic, with headquarters in Šumperk and Ústí nad Orlicí. From the entrance area Pilszcz Polish units then headed to East Bohemia along the route Opava – Šternberk – Mohelnice – Svitavy – Pílička – Hlinsko – Havlíčkův Brod with lateral process axes to Bystrici nad Pernštejnem, Žďár nad Sázavou and Golčův Jeníkov, with headquarters in Svitavy, Bystrice nad Pernštejnem, Hlinsko, Žďár nad Sázavou and Havlíčkův Brod (Fig. 2).¹² As of 14 September 1968, 28,612 soldiers, 750 tanks, 592 armoured personnel carriers, 434 cannons, 5,663 cars and 36 airplanes of

the Polish Army were stationed in Czechoslovakia.¹³ Local reports provide one of the most important sources documenting the presence of field fortifications from the August invasion of Czechoslovakia. The records documenting the Year 1968, if any, are basically divided into two main groups. The first group is represented by politically neutral notices, stating the presence of Warsaw Pact troops without further explanatory or descriptive data, which does not provide any relevant information for our purposes. The second group consists of detailed records documenting, in particular, the period between 21 and 30 August 1968. Although, for reasons of military secrecy, we do not learn from the reports the names of commanders, officers, names and types of military units, local news reports make it possible to refine the often very diverse and misleading information of witnesses. Thanks to them, we can limit the duration of Polish military camps from 22 or 27 August 1968 to 23 or 26 October 1968, when the Polish army withdrew from Czechoslovakia.¹⁴ Due to the escalated situation, the locals avoided these places while the camp was active. The features are not protected in any way, therefore smaller objects, such as one-man foxholes, skirmisher trenches, latrines, etc., probably

¹¹ Pajórek 1998, 134; Povolný 2008, 116.

¹² Pajórek 1998, 134; Povolný 2008, 119.

¹³ Cf. Povolný 2010, 156-157.

¹⁴ Cf. Musil and Netolický 2017.

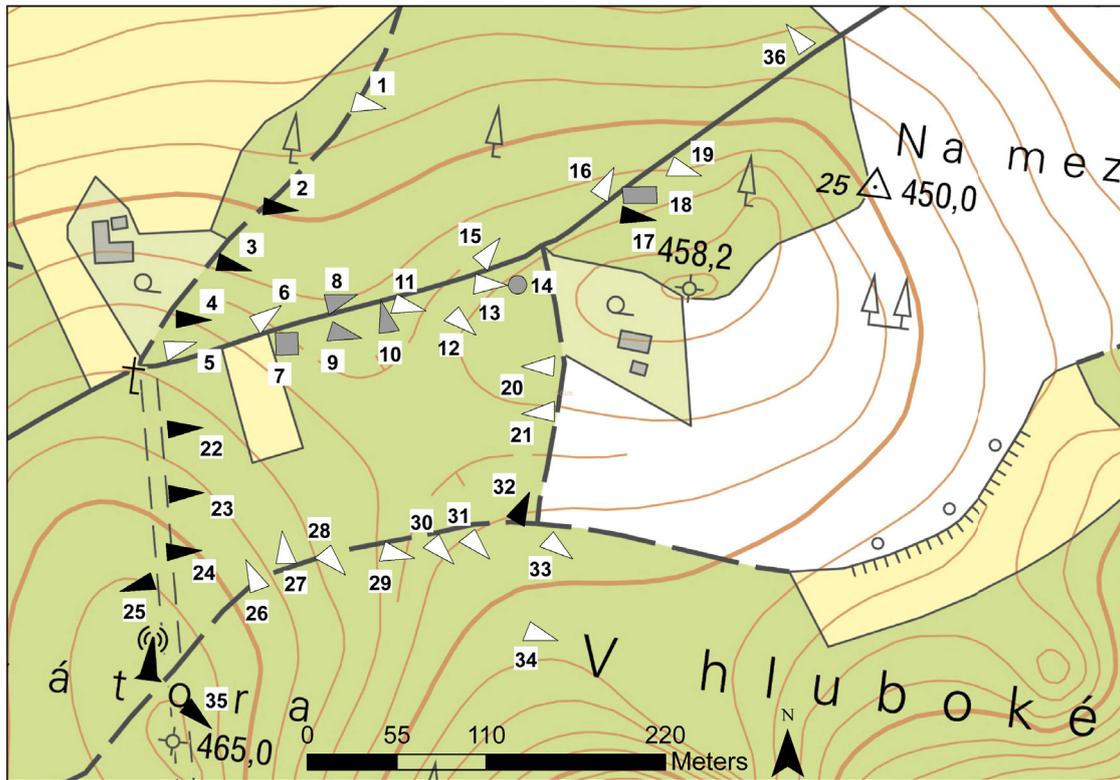


Fig. 3. Dachovské Paseky-Majlant, Chrudim District, East Bohemia, CZ. Plan of the Polish army encampment from 1968. Map key: black triangle – emplacement for tank; white triangle – emplacement for armoured personnel carrier; grey triangle – machinegun emplacement (The tip of the triangle shows firing direction); square – emplacement for recoilless weapons/RPG; grey rectangle – skirmisher's trench; grey point – unspecified feature. After Musil and Netolický 2017.

disappeared very soon after use. Larger features in the immediate vicinity of forest roads are still loaded with debris or bio-waste from nearby villages, so even those are often not recognized. Reports of witnesses and contemporary military field manuals allow us to get at least a general idea about the location and form of construction field fortifications. According to analyses of written sources, the testimony of local eyewitnesses and conducted non-destructive archaeological research in the Chrudim District we register a total of 14 camps from the August invasion of Warsaw Pact troops in 1968 (Fig. 1).¹⁵

Case study – the military camp near Dachovské Paseky-Majlant

During a surface survey of relics of the extinct medieval settlement near Majlant, we discovered the relics of field fortification for tanks, armoured personnel carriers and infantry, which were carried out according to the military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact.¹⁶ By comparing local media reports, the testimony of local witnesses and a dendrochronological survey, they were

found to be the remains of a small military unit of the Polish army from 1968. In total, 36 objects were identified and surveyed, which can be safely identified with the remains of field fortifications (Fig. 3). The rectangular centre of the closed military encampment measures approximately 150 × 250 m. Other military field fortifications were placed along the forest roads outside the rectangular centre. Overall, the military features covered an area of approximately 1.2 ha. All features were accessible from forest roads.

We found 8 dug-in emplacements for tanks in various states of preservation (Fig. 4). Another group of features were dug-in emplacements for armoured personnel carriers of the BRMD-1, BRDM-2 or BMP-1 types (Fig. 5). These differ from the tank emplacements in both dimensions and the absence of an emergency shelter in the side wall. Because of the strong disruption of these objects and their preserved dimensions, these objects cannot be clearly identified with a specific type of armoured personnel carrier. A total of 20 features have been documented that can be identified with armoured personnel carrier emplacements. Only five shallow concave features have been recorded that have been interpreted in three cases as machinegun emplacements (Fig. 6). In one case an emplacement for recoilless weapon (maybe RPG) and one skirmisher trench were identified.

¹⁵ Cf. Musil and Netolický 2017, Fig. 1.

¹⁶ E.g. Soviet field manuals – *Rukovodstvo* 1962; *Sbornik* 1970; Kalibernov et al. 1984; cf. Czechoslovakian field manuals – *ŽEN 2-1/1*; Čenger et al. 1971.



Fig. 4. Dachovské Paseky-Majlant, Chrudim District, East Bohemia (CZ). Dug-in emplacement for tank T-54. The emergency shelter was dug on the right-hand side. Photo J. Musil.



Fig. 5. Dachovské Paseky-Majlant, Chrudim District, East Bohemia (CZ). Dug-in emplacement for armoured personnel carrier unspecified type. Photo J. Musil.



Fig. 6. Dachovské Paseky-Majlant, Chrudim District, East Bohemia (CZ). Mashinegun emplacement. Photo J. Musil.

Case study – the military camp between Hroubovice and Nová Ves

Based on the testimony of witnesses, the 1968 camp has been re-identified (Fig. 7:A) and this is different from a similar camp of the Soviet Army from the late 1970s (Fig. 7:B). The field fortifications from 1968 there created two significant concentrations (Fig. 8). According to contemporary Soviet field manuals, we identified and documented the remains of dug-in emplacements for heavy equipment (tanks T-54 and armoured personnel carriers types BRDM-1, BRDM-2 and BTR-50). These differ in minor details¹⁷ from the emplacements built by the Czechoslovakian Army.¹⁸ Furthermore, we discovered dug-in emplacements for trucks and staff vehicles (Ural-375, ZIL-157, GAZ-6, UAZ-452), smaller foxholes and shelters for infantry and also large Underground shelters for staff. Unlike in the case of the recently published camp in Majlant,¹⁹ material archaeological sources of the presence of foreign military units (e.g. filter of gas mask IIM-41mu EO-16, cans, etc. – Figs. 9 and 10) were obtained.

Altogether 84 features of field fortifications were discovered and surveyed. These features created a total of two significant concentrations. The first concentration is situated along the edge of the forest about 0.3 km south of the boundaries of Hroubovice. Features line the dirt road that runs along the edge of the forest. This line ensured the defence of the north and northeast sides of the encampment. The rectangular centre of the closed military encampment created the second significant accumulation of field fortifications. This centre was already located in the cadastral territory of Nová Ves about 0.2 km southwest of the previous one. Most of the field fortifications lined forest roads - the northern and southern borders are created by parallel forest roads turning from the main road to Skuteč, while the western border was created by a road that crossed the forest to connected these two roads. The features marked out an area of approximately 300 × 450 m. Other military support structures were placed along the forest roads outside the rectangle. Overall, the military encampment was on an area of approximately 28 ha. Almost all field fortifications were accessible from forest roads. Underground shelters for staff were placed in the middle of the camp.

¹⁷ For example the shape of the emergency shelter – cf. Soviet field manuals – *Rukovodstvo* 1962; *Sbornik* 1970; Ermolayev and Safoshkina 1984, Figs. 24 and 25; Kaliberov et al. 1984.

¹⁸ Cf. Czechoslovakian field manuals – *ŽEN* 2-1/1; Čenger et al. 1971.

¹⁹ Musil and Netolický 2017.

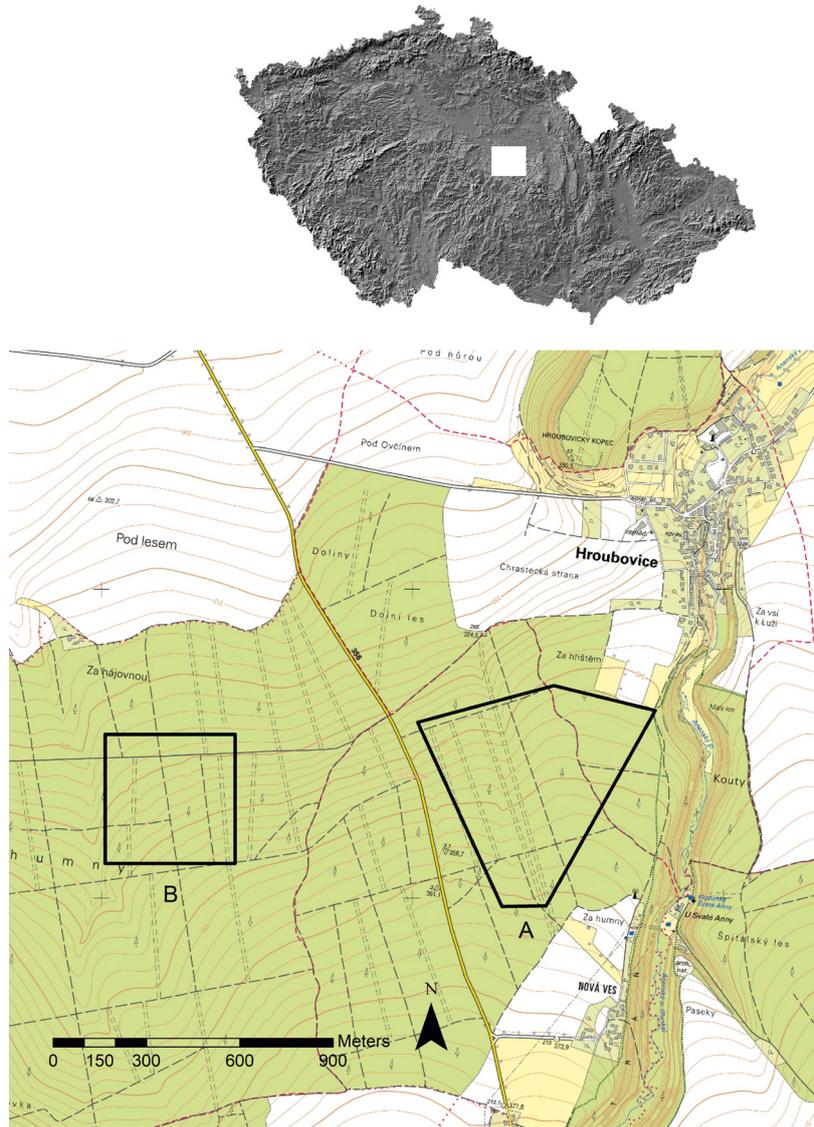


Fig. 7. Hroubovice-Nová Ves, Chrudim District, East Bohemia (CZ). A. encampment of Polish army from 1968; B. encampment of Soviet army from late 1970s. Author's draft.

The best preserved features were dug-in emplacements for T-54 tanks. A total of 29 dug-in emplacements for tanks were discovered in various state of preservation. A characteristic feature of a dug-in tank emplacement was an L-shaped emergency shelter. Another group of field fortifications were dug-in emplacements for armoured personnel carriers. Based on the dimensions and surviving construction details, it was possible to identify dug-in emplacements for three types of armoured personnel carriers used by the Polish army in 1968. A total of 12 emplacements belonged to the armoured personnel carrier BRDM-1, 4 emplacements were used by armoured personnel carriers type BRDM-2 and two emplacements belonged to armoured personnel carriers type BRT-50.²⁰

Another large group of features consisted of emplacements for military vehicles and features, which could not be assigned to a specific type of military vehicle due to the preserved features and dimensions. A total of 13 objects were documented. Specifically, three emplacements were designed for GAZ-66 trucks, one emplacement for the truck Ural-375 is preserved relatively well, while a slightly worse emplacement survives for a ZIL-157 truck. This vehicle could carry a radio, fuel tank, or rocket launcher. One feature was designed as an emplacement for an ambulance or troop-carrier van UAZ-452, another one could be associated with a GAZ-69 staff (?) car.²¹ The remaining six features could not be assigned to a specific type of military equipment based on preserved features and dimensions.

²⁰ Ermolayev and Safoshkina 1984, Fig. 126, Table on page 186.

²¹ Cf. Ermolayev and Safoshkina 1984, Fig. 126, Table on page 186.

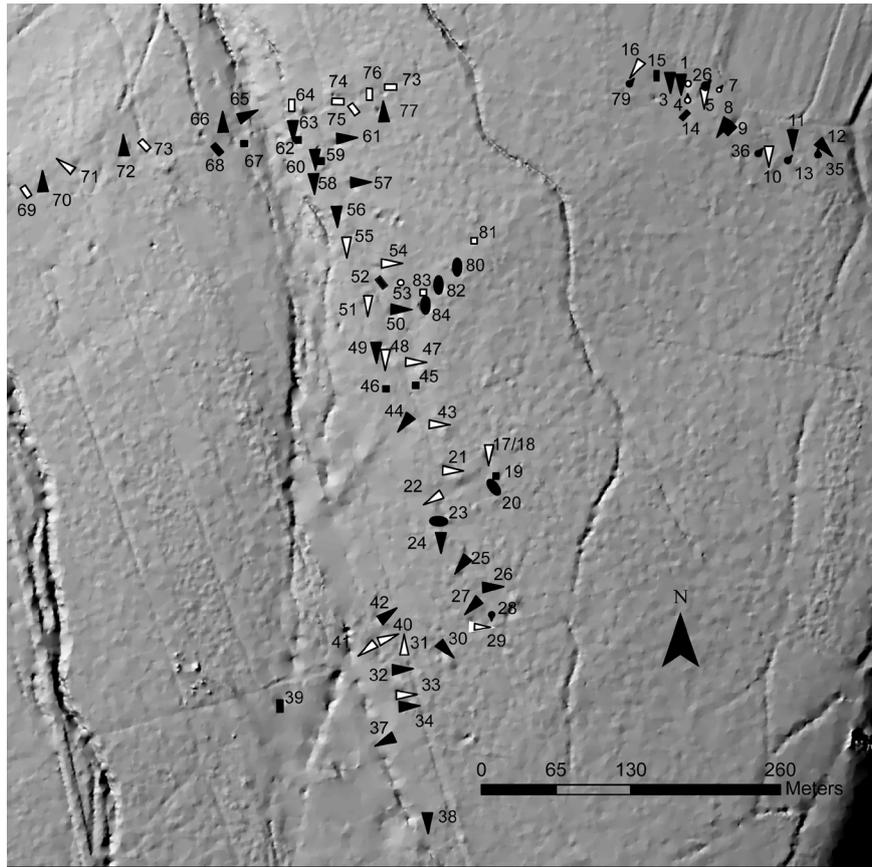


Fig. 8. Hroubovice-Nová Ves, Chrudim District, East Bohemia (CZ). Plan of the Polish army encampment from 1968. Map key: black triangle – emplacement for tank; white triangle – emplacement for armoured personnel carrier; (The tip of the triangle shows firing direction); black ellipse – underground shelter /*zemljanka*/; black rectangle – emplacement for Ural 375C, GAZ 69 and GAZ 66; white triangle – emplacement for UAZ452 and for technology; black wheel – machinegun emplacement; white circle – one-man foxhole and skirmisher trench; black square – covered shelter, uncovered shelter and two-man shelter; white square – unspecified military feature. Hillshaded DEM.



Fig. 9. Hroubovice-Nová Ves, Chrudim District, East Bohemia (CZ). Filter from SchM-M41 gas mask in situ. Photo J. Musil.

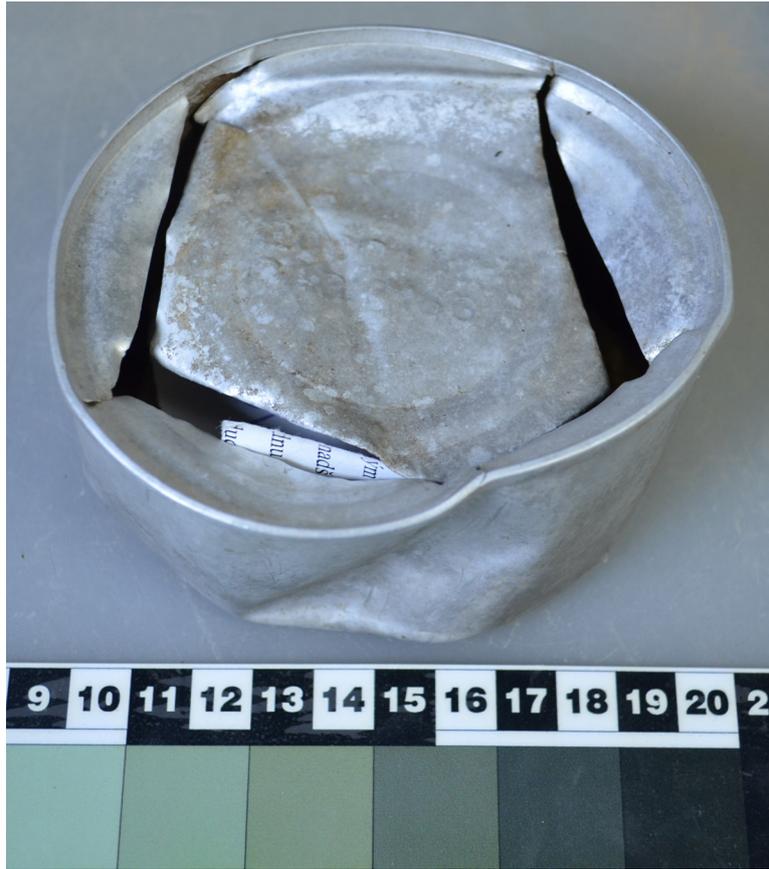


Fig. 10. Hroubovice-Nová Ves, Chrudim District, East Bohemia (CZ). Can opened by bayonet. Found in emplacement for armoured personnel carrier type BRDM-1 (Obj. 17/18). Photo J. Musil.

For the first time, we managed to identify shelters used for storing material and supplies and Underground shelters used for long-term habitation. The first group of shelters is represented by three L-shaped features.²² The longer sunken part represented its own storage space, and the steps were situated on the shorter side. Another five features could be interpreted as remains of Underground shelters (so-called *zemljanka*).²³ Three very large Underground shelters (cf. Fig. 5) were situated in one line in the central part of camp. These features we could identify with the military headquarters. Next to these features there were two more depressions, the function of which cannot be clearly determined due to the state of preservation. The last group of field fortifications on the site were stand-alone two one-man foxholes, one two-man foxhole, six machinegun emplacements and one skirmisher's trench.²⁴ There were probably more of these objects, but they disappeared soon due to their small size.

This site we could interpret as the remains of a military encampment of members of the 10th Panzer

Division of the 2nd Army of the Polish Army, which advanced into Eastern Bohemia from the entrance area of Pilszcz. The 10th Panzer Division of the 2nd Army consisted of the 2nd, 10th and 13th Tank Regiments, the 25th Mechanized Regiment and the 24th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment.

Based on the structure and number of documented features, we assume that there was a local HQ for a unit of regiment strength. In the middle of the camp were three Underground shelters. This central place was surrounded by a total of 29 emplacements for tanks, 18 emplacements for three different types of armoured personnel carriers, and 13 emplacements for trucks and other vehicles. This distribution corresponds to the strength of at least two tank companies, one company of motorized infantry and separate reconnaissance and chemical groups, not counting other staff personnel.²⁵ According to these calculations, at least 288 Polish soldiers were dislocated here.

²² Ermolayev and Safoshkina 1984, Figs. 114 and 175.

²³ Ermolayev and Safoshkina 1984, Fig. 118.

²⁴ Ermolayev and Safoshkina 1984, Figs. 7 and 8.

²⁵ Kajetanowicz 2005, 322, 428.



Fig. 11. Hroubovice-Nová Ves, Chrudim District, East Bohemia (CZ).
Underground shelter for staff of 10th Panzer Division of 2nd Army. Photo J. Musil.



Fig. 12. Hroubovice-Nová Ves, Chrudim District, East Bohemia (CZ).
Detail of ceiling of Underground shelter for staff. Photo J. Musil.

Conclusion

Remains of field fortifications in the Chrudim Region have been preserved in relatively good condition, often with material cultural remains of military life on the surface. The field fortifications of that period are not protected in any way, therefore smaller objects, such as one-man foxholes, skirmisher's trenches, latrines, etc., probably disappeared very soon. Larger features in the immediate vicinity of forest roads are still littered with debris or bio-waste from nearby vil-

lages, so even those are often not recognized. Reports of witnesses and contemporary military field manuals allow us to derive at least a general idea about the location and form of construction of field fortifications. According to analysis of written sources, the testimony of local eyewitnesses and non-destructive archaeological research carried out in the Chrudim District we have been able to register a total of 14 camps from the August invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968.

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Streszczenie

Pamięć krajobrazu i śmiecie. Archeologiczne ślady wojskowej interwencji do Czechosłowacji w sierpniu 1968 roku na przykładzie regionu Chrudim

Jednym z najdotkliwszych rozdziałów współczesnej historii Czech są wydarzenia tzw. Praskiej Wiosny roku 1968. Inwazja wojsk Układu Warszawskiego unicestwiła wszelkie nadzieje na przebudowę socjalizmu w ówczesnej Czechosłowacji i boleśnie napiętnowała całą generację. Artykuł poświęcony jest archeologicznym śladom

obecności wojsk inwazyjnych z 1968 roku, ujawnianym w lasach południowej części regionu Chrudim (wschodnie Czechy, Pardubicki kraj). Tego typu obiekty, z punktu widzenia współczesnego prawodawstwa, nie są chronione w sposób należyty – są niszczone w ramach działań, wynikających ze sposobów gospodarowania lasami, co powoduje ich bardzo szybkie znikanie. W przeciągu ostatnich dwudziestu lat nastąpił wyraźny wzrost liczby zdewastowanych stanowisk archeologicznych. Regularnie zasypywane gruzem budowlanym i odpadami organicznymi z okolicznych wsi są m.in. większe okopy dla czołgów i transporterów opancerzonych. Ponadto obiekty te są niwelowane w związku z działaniami służby leśnej (np. w trakcie modernizacji dróg). Zniszczeniu przyczyniają się także nielegalne poszukiwania grup osób z wykrywaczami metali.

Na podstawie analizy źródeł pisanych oraz relacji naocznych świadków, jak również nieinwazyjnej prospekcji archeologicznej, na terenie powiatu Chrudim zarejestrowano w sumie 14 obozów z czasu sierpniowej inwazji wojsk Układu Warszawskiego w 1968 roku. W niniejszym artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań archeologicznych dwóch obozów wojskowych członków 10 Dywizji Pancerniej 2 Armii Wojska Polskiego, która do wschodnich Czech wkroczyła z pozycji wyjściowej Pilszcz. 10 Dywizja składała się z 2, 10 i 13 Pułku Czołgów, 25 Pułku Zmechanizowanego i 24 Pułku Artylerii Przeciwlotniczej. Na podstawie struktury i liczby zadokumentowanych obiektów uznano, że obóz na obszarze Hroubovice-Nová Ves stanowił punkt dowodzenia lokalnej jednostki, odpowiadającej pułkowi. Relikty stanowisk dowodzenia rozpoznano w obiektach nr 80, 82 i 84, usytuowanych w jednej osi w centralnej części wspomnianego obozu. Tę centralną część otaczało łącznie 29 osłoniętych wałem stanowisk dla średnich czołgów, 18 – dla trzech różnych typów transporterów opancerzonych, 13 – dla samochodów i innego sprzętu. To rozłożenie odpowiada wielkością zapewne dwóm kompaniom pancernym, jednej kompanii zmotoryzowanej oraz pododdziałom: rozpoznawczemu i przeciwchemicznemu. Na podstawie ogólnych przeliczeń analizowanych obiektów i załóg poszczególnych typów pojazdów, można przyjąć, że w leśnym kompleksie między miejscowościami Hroubovice a Nová Ves w 1968 roku mógł stacjonować kontyngent wojskowy, składający się minimalnie z 288 żołnierzy.