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Mountain Service in the Czech Lands from Its Foundation until the Second World War

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Górska służba ratunkowa na ziemiach czeskich od czasów założenia po drugą wojnę światową

Streszczenie

Celem tej pracy jest spojrzenie na historię Górskich Służb Ratunkowych w Czechach, której początki sięgają 1930 roku – czasów pierwszej Republiki Czeskiej. Wtedy nastąpił rozwój życia społecznego, turystyki, turystyki wysokogórskiej oraz narciarstwa. Społeczeństwo zaczęło wyjeżdżać w rejony górskie w celu spędzenia wolnego czasu, oddawaniu się swojemu hobby i podziwianiu piękna otaczającej natury. Z tego wyniknęły pierwsze urazy spowodowane między innymi niezajomością terenu, niestabilnością warunków pogodowych, a także brakiem odpowiedniego sprzętu i narzędzi. Pierwsze grupy ratunkowe tworzyły głównie osoby zamieszkujące dane tereny ponieważ znały dany obszar oraz topografię terenu, dlatego pierwszymi uczestnikami wypraw ratunkowych byli cieśle, listonosze, instruktorzy szkółki narciarskiej Slalom i Wintersportvereine, strażacy oraz członkowie żandarmerii. Wzrost wypadków i wezwań pomocy nastąpił zimą na przełomie lat 1934/35. Podczas dwóch pierwszych tygodni lutego w Karkonoszach zginęło sześć osób. Po tych tragicznych wydarzeniach praski ratusz oraz gubernator obwodu Vrchlabi – sędzia Vladimír Zabaj Vain – zdecydował o utworzeniu Górskiej Służby Ratunkowej.

Słowa kluczowe: ratownictwo górskie, narciarstwo, turystyka, turystyka górską, wzajemna pomoc.

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to look back at the history of the Mountain Service and to introduce the readers of the article to the history of Mountain Service in the Czech Republic, which dates back to the period of the First Republic, that is around 1930. At that time there was a great development of community life in European countries and the same holds true for the Czech Republic. The development of tourism, mountain climbing and skiing resulted in a higher number of people coming to the mountain areas where they could enjoy their new hobby and share the delights of nature. It resulted in first injuries and distress caused partially by people's lack of knowledge of the terrain, partially by weather instability and also by insufficient technical equipment and tools. The first rescue teams recruited from native inhabitants who knew the local terrain and mountain areas. The first participants in the rescue activities, who were only insufficiently technically equipped, were woodworkers, postmen, Slalom and Wintersportvereine ski schools instructors, firemen, as well as gendarmes. The increase in accidents and events needing help took place in winter 1934/35. During the first two weekends in February six people died on the ridges of the Giant Mountains. After these events the Provincial Office in Prague initiated the establishment of Mountain Service with the help of District Office in Vrchlabí and the District Governor JUDr. Vladimír Záboj Vaina. The District Office proceeded to the establishment of the Mountain Rescue Service.

Keywords: Mountain Service, skiing, tourism, mountaineering, mutual aid.

Introduction

Before the rescue teams in the Giant Mountains were organised in 1930, there was a great expansion of community activity especially in bigger towns. Development of tourism resulted in satisfying demand for accommodation and catering capacity in the mountains. Inhabitants of the mountains, who mostly made a living breeding cows and goats, at first turn parts of their houses into guest rooms, then extend their houses to create better possibilities for accomodating and catering tourists. It means a kind of extra earnings for the inhabitants of the mountains as well as increasing the standard of living, which had been low so far. The most important of associations which supported tourism and stay in nature was surely the Czechoslovak Tourist Club, Sokol and Ski Association of RČS. These associations also had regional branches called counties which helped to organize the community activity. One such association was for instance Czech Giant Mountains Ski Association in Jilemnice which belongs to a skiing county of the Giant Mountains. Even the German associations as Riesengebirgs-vereine seated in Vrchlabí or Hauptverband der Deutschen Wintersportsvereine seated in Liberec supported and organized tourism and sports in nature. With more and more tourists coming, there comes a need to take care of tourists in distress. The first organizers are the volunteering firemen who are native and know the country and often set off to help tourists in trouble. The need for rescue teams is growing and therefore the new members of rescue teams come from ski instructors. There was an improvement in organization due to participation of local gendarmerie who had a phone connection and could take part in organizing the searches themselves

and on top of that they were able to secure medical help etc. The number of rescue actions grew from year to year and came to tens at the end of the 30s.

Beginnings Mountain Service in the Czech lands

During the winter 1934–1935 there was a lot of snow in the mountains and the weather conditions were not suitable for skiing. During the first weekend in February six people died in the Giant Mountains and other tourists closely escaped death¹. This is how the situation of winter Giant Mountains at the beginning of February is described in appendix no. 4, National Papers on 11 February 1935. In the west of the Giant Mountains, in Rokytnice region, organized groups of rescuers came into existence. During winter 1933-1934 in Rokytnice nad Jizerou there arose a rescue group under the leadership of an Austrian Alois Wenzl who was an experienced skier and an expert in the Alps. His group consisted of ten members, mostly woodworkers from Horní Domky².

It seemed evident that it was necessary to prepare and set up an organization which would be dealing with rescue and providing first aid in the mountainous area of the Giant Mountains. Before that winter the first ambulance convoy of voluntary fireman unit started. This convoy then directed its team to the mountains where the injury was announced or where a skier or a winter tourist was reported missing. Later the fireman unit obtained an ambulance car which was able to transfer the injured person as fast as possible to the nearest hospital in Vrchlabí. The local association „Wintersportvereine“ in Špindlerův Mlýn supported this firemen's association and the same is true for instructors of the local ski school „Slalom“ which enabled success of the rescue expeditions. The impulse of the district office in Vrchlabí and the German association „Riesengebirgsverein“ and the Association of Czechoslovak Tourists and even the headquarters of post offices and telegraphs in Pardubice resulted in implementation of a mutual telephone connection between all important buildings (with telephone connection) in foothills. It became easier to inform the relevant place about the accident or the missing people (in late hours) and take action. In Špindlerův Mlýn a special protective unit was established providing continuous and professional rescue service in the mountains, cooperating with local fireman unit, local sportsmen from a German association of winter sports, members of ski school “Slalom” and local gendarmerie, which should receive information about accidents. One such training alarm was organized in January that year. Two general practitioners

¹ Mountain Service Archive Giant Mountains, National Papers, 11 February 1935.

² Mountain Service Archive Giant Mountains, Chronicle of Mountain Service Giant Mountains of Vrchlabí region – wooden, p. 6.

were present, MUDr. Vilém Pick³ and MUDr. Kindler, who had been training a rescue team since autumn and therefore could see the use of first aid in practice. The rescue team consisted of 6 sections (3 recruited from ski instructors mainly from ski school Slalom, 3 from voluntary fireman unit). Each section contained 6 men. Four sections were in Špindlerův Mlýn (1 of firemen and 3 of ski instructors), one was in SvatýPetr (firemen) and one was in Leierovy boudy (firemen)⁴.

This effort to help people in distress has a long tradition in the mountainous terrain. Many people and institutions participated in it: the fire brigade, instructors from the Czech ski school Slalom in Špindlerův Mlýn, instructors from the German ski school Wintersportvereine in Špindlerův Mlýn, wood workers, postmen, employees of chalets, representatives of gendarmerie in Špindlerův Mlýn led by commander Zvára. In short, all those people who knew the mountainous terrain, could use skis as a means of transport in the mountains and were willing to help. They were organized into six sections consisting of six members. The professional theoretical and practical parts in the form of training were provided by MUDr. Wilhelm Pick, a general practitioner and later a mayor of Špindlerův Mlýn, as mentioned in the article in *Národní politika* no. 41 from 10 February 1935.

During winter 1934/1935, there were so many rescue actions and tragical events that it became necessary to set up a unified organization which would only be directed at rescue actions in the mountainous terrain. Therefore, in March 1935 JUDr. Vladimír Zábaj Vaina,⁵ the chief of political governance in Vrchlabí

³ The Pick family came from a Jewish community in Velká Bukovina u Chvalkovic, west of Česká Skalice. MUDr. Wilhelm Pick was born on 10 January 1875 in Choustníkovo Hradiště. At school he was considered hard-working and clever, he studied at a German grammar school in Hostinné and the Medical Faculty of Charles University in Prague, where he graduated in 1901. He started as a general practitioner in little-known Špindlerův Mlýn. As a mountain doctor he went to see his patients on a horse in summer and on skis in winter. Dr. Pick was one of the founders of a ski association Skiverein Spindelmühle and he became its chairman. Before the war he is still mentioned as a member of the main committee of Österreichische Skiverein. During the First World War he was deployed as a doctor and worked as the leading doctor in Bucharest and later in Cirkvenica. After the war he returned to Špindlerův Mlýn and from 1919 to 1936 he worked as the mayor. He intensively participated in developing the tourism, he was a co-founder of the association Wintersportverein. He took part in training of the rescue teams. Dr. Pick died on 13 December of stomach cancer. He is buried on a local cemetery in Špindlerův Mlýn. *Krkonose* 1995, no. 6, p. 20–21.

⁴ Giant Mountains Museum of KRNAP in Vrchlabí, *Národní politika* no. 41, 10 February 1935.

⁵ JUDr. Vladimír Zábaj Vaina was born in 1876 in Mladá Boleslav. After his studies he worked as a governor's officer in Karlín from 1901 to 1908 and in 1908 he became a district commissioner in Turnov, where he stayed until 1921. Then he became a district governor in Semily and in that position he remained until 1928, when he was transferred as a district governor to Vrchlabí. According to documents stored in the State District Archive in Semily, Dr. Vaina was a typical clerk. During the First World War he was rewarded a Medal of Merit, however he was often considered to be a bureaucrat. In 1936 Dr. Vaina together with his wife, a writer and painter Magda Bílá (her own name was Vlasta Ebenhochová) moved to Bělohrad and there they lived at house no. 32 on Masaryk Square. His further life was influenced by the Second World War.

district addresses individual organizations which at that time were participating in the help in the mountaneous terrain. He asked them to propose how the unified organization could be working. At the end of winter there were four proposals collected, of which two proposals were preserved, one by Jindřich Ambrož, secretary of the Czechoslovak Tourist Club, Giant Mountains County⁶ in Jilemnice and one by Hauptverband Deutscher Gebirgsvereine u. Wintersportvereine⁷.

Provincial office represented by JUDr. Jan Kamenický⁸ addressed the District Governor of Political Administration in Vrchlábí JUDr. Vladimír Vaina and asked him to call organizations, which in any way participated in rescue activities in Špindlerův Mlýn region and central Giant Mountains. The target was to create an organization with a uniform system of management, which would cover the largest possible area of the mountains neglectant of state territory or political administration districts⁹. The meeting was to be held on 12 May 1935 in Špindlerův Mlýn in the Central Hotel.

The conference about organization of rescue service in the Giant Mountains took place on Sunday in the Central Hotel in Špindlerův Mlýn. It was called by the Provincial Office in Prague and it was attended by district governors of Jilemnice, Vrchlábí and Trutnov, representatives of Ministry of Post and Telegraphs from Pardubice, representatives of land gendarmerie headquarters, land military headquarters, Czechoslovak Red Cross (MUDr. Slavík and director Valta), Czechoslovak Tourists Club (Vružinský and secretary Ambrož from Jilemnice), department KČsT in Jilemnice (counsellor Kadlec and inspector Jäger), Union of Skiers ČSR (architect Jarolímek, engineer Pilňáček), Union of Mountain Establishments (secretary Hlaváček), and relevant German organizations, such as Riesengebirgsverein, Hauptverband Deutscher Gebirgsvereine u. Wintersportver-

On 16 March 1943 the local council was dissolved and an administrative commission was appointed with JUDr. Vaina as its head. JUDr. Vladimír Vaina died in Bělohrad on 14 February 1954 and was buried in Nová Paka. Available from: <http://www.lazne-belohrad.cz/mesto/osobnosti-mesta/vladimir-vaina/>[cit. 2017-14-05, 12:10]

⁶ Giant Mountains Museum of KRNP in Vrchlábí, Proposal of Jindřich Ambrož regarding the organization of Mountain Service.

⁷ State district historical archive in Trutnov, Proposal regarding organization of Mountain Service Hauptverband deutscher Gebirgsvereine und Wintersportvereine.

⁸ JUDr. Jan Kamenický was born in Semily on Komenský Square in the house of present primary art school on 15 February 1876. After graduation from a grammar school in Jičín and the Law Faculty in Prague he started to work as a district governor in Semily on 2 September 1902. After four years he was transferred to the district governor's office in Jičín and later to the governor's office in Prague. After the First World War he became a district governor in Ústí nad Labem, but as soon as May 1921 he was transferred to work at the provincial political governance in Prague, where at the end of 1928 he was appointed the chief of political governance and the head of provincial office for district matters. From 1932 he worked at the provincial office as an officer for tourism. He died in Prague in 1951. Available from: <http://www.kct.semily.cz/novinky/13-sin-slavy-kct/>, [cit. 2017-14-05, 12:15].

⁹ Mountain Service archive Giant Mountains, Národní politika on 9 May 1935.

eine, Land Union of German Firemen, numerous communities in the Giant Mountains. The conference was attended by 90 people and was started and led by the provincial office, represented by the secretary and chief J. Kamenický. A lively debate arose, which resulted in many good proposals. Those proposals were summarized in a program which was to be further elaborated by “permanent executive working committee”, consisting of representatives of all organizations mentioned above. Its chairman was to be the district governor of Vrchlabí Dr. Vaina. The committee was supposed to meet for the first time at the beginning of June and meetings were supposed to be held regularly every two weeks. All administration work was supposed to be completed by the end of October that year so that the newly organized rescue service could start working at the beginning of winter. Extending the telephone network between the chalets in the Giant Mountains and foothill stations was discussed, as well as better organization of telephone service, specially in evening hours in the main ski season. The financial aspect was also dealt with (contribution of public offices, voluntary tax on expenses in mountain establishments, surcharge to sport express train tickets etc.) as well as the topic of securing rescue expeditions. The meeting finished after 1 p.m. with a good result, on which the organization will be built within half a year and later perfected¹⁰.

Dr. Vaina had a speech¹¹ in that meeting, in which he described the actual state of organization of rescue activities and possibilities of a new organization based on foreign models. For instance, in Austria the Mountain Service had been working for more than 30 years at that time. At the end of the meeting, all participating organizations were asked to depute their representatives to the committee and inform Dr. Vaina in a written form, whom they had authorized to represent their organization. “Rescue Service Executive Committee” was in charge of the rescue service then and the next term of a meeting was set on 29 May 1935. According to the report the meeting finished around 1 p.m. and immediately afterwards, on 13 May 1935, a report from the meeting was written and sent to all participants¹². On the following days the district office in Vrchlabí started receiving names of people who were authorized by individual organizations participating in the meeting in Špindlerův Mlýn¹³.

By the end of the year six main stations were established: Rokytnice nad Jizerou, Špindlerův Mlýn, Pec pod Sněžkou, Malá Úpa and Janské Lázně, each of them having its leader. There were thirty-six subordinate smaller stations in mountain ridges. Immediately after setting up the stations, 320 members were

¹⁰ Mountain Service archive Giant Mountains, Národní politika, 13 May 1935.

¹¹ Mountain Service archive Giant Mountains, Dr. Vaina's paper in the meeting in Špindlerův Mlýn on 12 May 1935.

¹² State district historical archive in Trutnov, Report from meeting in the Central Hotel in Špindlerův Mlýn on 12 May 1935.

¹³ State district historical archive in Trutnov, Deputy's Power of attorney in Executive committee of rescue service.

registered, all equipped with canvas badges for the right sleeve of their jackets and membership cards with a photo and a signature of the chief (Dr. Vaina). The membership cards were issued by the district office on behalf of the provincial office in Prague. Those were the beginnings, accompanied by friendship in the mountains in difficult conditions, but also insufficient material equipment and bad phone connections between individual chalets and stations. That was a challenge for the management of the new organization in the time preceding the Second World War. Nobody was keen to solve the total lack of finance at first, discussions usually finished with proposals who should contribute and who should collect the funds. One of the proposals was, for instance, to increase the train fares to the Giant Mountains and devote this extra money to the new organization. Another idea was for the restaurants and hotels to charge an extra fee for the development of the mountain rescue organization. The promise of the Skiers Union to buy first aid kits can be considered as partial help¹⁴. The Ministry of Health also tried to help, as well as the members themselves, who tried to collect small contributions from tourists. The Red Cross helped in terms of material equipment, as well as Samaritan service, which helped training the members and which tried to base on the work of Dr. Pick from Špindlerův Mlýn. The directorate of the Post Office in Pardubice tried to implement a phone connection preferably to chalets and stations of the Mountain Service for better communication, exchanging information about missing persons, and calling for help¹⁵.

The foundation of a rescue organization in the mountains was a great event for the local associations. It united people regardless of their religious differences and nationalities for a noble goal such as helping people in distress or saving somebody's life. Demographic composition of inhabitants in the mountaneous region was positively in favour of German nationality. For instance, Špindlerův Mlýn had 1278 permanent inhabitants in 1921, though only 15 were of Czech nationality. In the 1936 Jahrbuch (or yearbook) of the Hauptverband Deutscher Gebirgsvereine und Wintersportvereine association was published and the foundation itself was described as a great event there. There was also a short note that the Provincial Office and the Chief of Political Governance of Vrchlabí District JUDr. Vaina were among organizers of the foundation. Great solidarity and willingness to cooperate was expressed¹⁶. One of the greatest personalities of the association was undoubtedly Quido Rotter¹⁷.

¹⁴ State District Historical Archive in Trutnov, Report of District Governor Dr. Vaina to Provincial Office on 23 September 1935.

¹⁵ State District Historical Archive in Trutnov, Status of solving telecommunication connection autumn 1935.

¹⁶ State District Historical Archive in Trutnov, Jahrbuch 1936, Hauptverband Deutscher Gebirgsvereine und Wintersportvereine.

¹⁷ Quido Rotter (1860–1940) – factory owner in Hoření Vrchlabí, the chairman and a highly-decorated member of Hauptverband Deutscher Gebirgsvereine und Wintersportvereine from 1882,

Shortly after the foundation had been established, the District Governor asked the heads of chalets to create first aid kits and emergency boxes which would help in case of a rescue action. After that, some chalet owners created a list of medical material which they were equipped with and which they could provide in case of a rescue action¹⁸.

After the foundation, 6 main and 35 subsidiary stations of Mountain Service were established. At each station there was a leader appointed, who was responsible for the material of the station (mostly basic medical material), carriers, blankets, sledge, ropes, spare clothes. By November 1935, the phone connection was established between all main mountain service stations and most of the subsidiary stations due to the Directorate of Post and Telegraphs Pardubice. All members of the new organization were fitted with a membership card and a patch on a jacket sleeve. With the assistance of the Samaritan Association and the Union of Skiers of the Czechoslovak Republic all stations of the Mountain Service were equipped with first aid kits. Insurance was also provided for the members in case of injury or harm during a rescue action or during an activity for the Mountain Service. Before each approaching winter season, a lot of health training and training alarms were practised so as to make most people ready in the shortest time possible. At the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936 intensive discussions were led about training dogs for the need of the Mountain Service. A breed was needed, which was easily trainable, with an excellent sense of smell and hearing as well as physical strength. It was not easy to find such a breed, because there are always compromises when it comes to dogs. If a breed has a great sense of smell, then the dog is usually not strong enough, if the dog is physically strong and able to stay in cold conditions for a long time, then it is usually hard to train etc. In foreign countries, where the Mountain Service had been in existence for decades, the Bernhard dog were mostly used. Mountain rescuers in Slovakia in the High Tatras were breeding such dogs, so these rescuers were addressed. Even a cousin of Dr. Vaina had such dogs and was willing to give a few puppies to the Mountain Service, however, it never happened because the puppies got sick. Another ad-

who started beautiful museum collections in Vrchlabí. He was a member of the organization of German winter sports associations, which had four committees: for youth, bobsleigh, sled and skiing. He is known especially from old German literature as "Father of Skiing" in the Giant Mountains. He was the owner of a thriving spinning mill and a long-time officer of the Giant Mountains Association, a founder of student tourist hostels, which continue until present day as Jugendherberge in Germany and Austria. In 1896 he founded a Giant Mountains section of Austrian Ski Association and in the years 1903–1907 he was a chairman of the newly established German Ski Federation of the Giant Mountains. He took part in financing ski equipment for mountain schools. Available from: <http://www.freiheit.cz/11-krkonose--mesicnik-o-prirode-a-lidech/469-quido-rotter-1860--1940.html>, [cit. 2017-14-06, 14:10].

¹⁸ State District Historical Archive in Trutnov, Replies to District Governor Dr. Vaina about the status of rescue material.

dressed supplier was Canisport or Bernhard Dog Breeders Association¹⁹. However, we do not know what puppies arrived or if it was possible to train them.

In the second half of 1936, JUDr. Vladimír Záboj Vaina retired. He moved from Vrchlabí to Lázně Bělohrad. However, he accepted the request of his successor and remained in the organizing committee, for which he was reelected for his experience in the field of Mountain Service at a meeting on 27 November 1936²⁰. His successor on the position of the District Governor of Political Governance was JUDr. Jaroslav Macoun. He also took over the position of a chairman of the Executive Committee of Mountain Service. By the end of 1936 preparation and organization of ridge stations had been finished. The number of members reached 320 in that year. The minimal age for entering was determined to be 21 and each new member was appointed. As has been mentioned above, every new member was fitted with a membership card and a patch on a jacket sleeve. Mountain Service was about to be organized in other districts, i.e. in Jilemnice and Trutnov. The long awaited telephone connection between the main stations of Mountain Service and ridge stations was also completed. In the first year of the existence of the Mountain Service they carried out 7 accompaniments, 14 transports to chalets, 45 transports into the valley, 16 transports to hospital, 41 first aid provisions concerning lighter injuries, 44 first aid provisions concerning serious injuries, 40 medical interventions, 4 bigger searches, 1 false alarm. Thanks to this, there were no victims²¹. A great deal of work was done in the aspect of material equipment. Thanks to persistent work, communication and requests for support the Mountain Service was equipped at the beginning as follows: 2 non-folding carriers, 4 folding carriers, 12 bags, 20-25 splints of various sizes, 70 tricorn scarves, 305 packages of cotton wool, 12 pairs of scissors, 6 pairs of tweezers, 18 Rico bandages, 189 packages of gauze and other medical materials. All came from the property of the Red Cross and even after transfer remained its property²².

In 1937 several training alarms took place, as well as a few trainings and lessons on health education, so that the members remained professional. What is more, the inhabitants of mountain villages were getting to know more about the first aid. It is indicated by the fact that Dr. Macoun was invited to see one of these training sessions, which was held by the Czechoslovak Red Cross in Jilemnice²³.

¹⁹ State District Historical Archive in Trutnov, Correspondence with the Assotiation of Bernhard Dog Breeders, Canisport, with Dr. Vaina.

²⁰ State District Historical Archive in Trutnov, Thank you note to JUDr. Vaina and his reelection for the Executive Committee of Mountain Service.

²¹ Mountain Rescue Archive Giant Mountains, Národní politika, 11 November 1936, no. 310.
²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Giant Mountains Museum of KRNAP in Vrchlabí, Invitation for JUDr. Macoun to a samaritan training 20 February 1937.

Situation of the rescue team in the Šumava Mountains

In other Czech mountain ranges the situation was similar to the one in the Giant Mountains. Rescue teams in the Jizera Mountains and in Liberec region were mentioned above. The situation in the Šumava Mountains was the same.

On 27 January a meeting was held at the initiative of a District Governor of Political Governance in Sušice. It was chaired by the Deputy District Governor, Chief Commissioner of Political Governance in Sušice JUDr. Karel Krombholz and it was attended by 13 representatives of various associations. At the meeting, a District Committee of Mountain Winter Rescue Service in Sušice was established. Rescue stations were to be set up in Modrava, Prášíly, Grünbergova Hut', Srní and Hartmanice. State forest administration in Dlouhá Ves with its head, ing. Jiří Zikmund, expressed their understanding and supported the planned actions. Individual stations were supposed to be set up in an old forest house in Modrava, in the cottage of the Czechoslovak Tourists Club in Prášíly, in the state gamekeeper's lodge in Grünbergova Hut', in the gendarmerie station in Srní and in the gendarmerie station in Hartmanice for the time being. All rescue stations were to be equipped with first aid tools, sledge carriers, electrical lamps etc. When deciding where to set up the station, the telephone connection was taken into consideration. Employees of state forest administration, as well as leaders of gendarmerie stations were chosen to be leaders of the stations. They were all supposed to divide sections among themselves and appoint a sufficient number of people, who knew the terrain well, for rescue groups. Every patrol consisted of four men and the number of patrols was to be determined by the leader according to the terrain. The central station of the rescue service was set up in Sušice. All activities were to be organized from there. Three members were chosen to make an organization plan: Alois Kot, a district school inspector, B. Picka, a teacher, and František Holý a hospital administrator. As far as money was concerned, they decided to ask central associations, businesses and companies which realized the importance of such an enterprise. The central district committee of Mountain Winter Rescue Service was established in Prachatice and the district lieutenant colonel Jaroslav Grund, a notary in Sušice, and ing. Karel Schell, a factory owner in Dlouhá Ves were chosen as delegates of the Sušice group. The chairman of the district committee of the Winter Rescue Service was appointed Petr Němejc, the District Governor and Councillor of Political Governance, and his deputy JUDr. Karel Krombholz, Chief Commissioner of Political Governance²⁴.

The establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic gave rise to the problem of national cohabitation. Occasional problems appeared throughout the Republic, and the mountain region was not an exception. However, they were not very frequent and started a bit later. On 15 June 1935, there was an article published,

²⁴ Private archive of Emil Kintzl, Sušické listy, no. 5/1938, p. 2.

which pointed out the existence of both nations in the new Mountain Service in the Giant Mountains and the possibility of presence of „turners“ and „hakenkrajclers“ among members of the Mountain Service²⁵. An answer to this article was provided by the reaction of Jindřich Ambrož in a letter, where he considered those comments as exaggerated²⁶. Similar information got as far as the Provincial Office in Prague. The chief of Political Governance, Dr. Vaina, was asked to describe the situation. Dr. Vaina depicted the situation as stable and highly recommended further cooperation in the Giant Mountains where districts overlapped. JUDr. Říha replied on behalf of the provincial president and expressed his approval of cooperation in activities connected with saving human life²⁷.

Conclusion

It is not easy to judge how much the situation changed with the approaching Second World War. How much did some members of Mountain Service, perhaps first loyal to the state and entering the Mountain Service due to the simple need to help a man in distress, change. We don't know how much the information and political campaign under the impact of German nationalism influenced their life. Supposedly, a great number of members were influenced a lot and some were influenced less. We must take into consideration that there were more than 3 million German people living in the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, most of them were living in the border mountains, so called Sudetenland. The situation was changing with the increasing nationalistic activity of the German Turner Associations.

After separating the Sudetenland from the Republic in 1938 a certain number of inhabitants moved inland, away from the borderland. At that time the Czech Mountain Service ceased to exist until the end of the Second World War. The activity was taken over by the German Bergdienst. Members of the Czech Mountain Service, who were of German nationality, continued working in the mountains only for Bergdienst, as well as some Czech inhabitants of the Giant Mountains who did not head for inland. The Giant Mountains were used by the German people for holiday. During the war a lot of German inhabitants of the Giant Mountains went to war, therefore there was a shortage of members in Bergdienst. The imperial office solved this problem by total deployment of previous members of Mountain Service of Czech nationality.

Shortly after the Second World War, in 1945, there was a spontaneous recovery of activities of the Mountain Service in the Giant Mountains. It has a new

²⁵ Giant Mountains Museum of KRNAP in Vrchlabí, Venkov-Praha from 15 June 1935.

²⁶ Giant Mountains Museum of KRNAP in Vrchlabí, Jindřich Ambrož's letter from 8 October 1935.

²⁷ State District Historical Archive in Trutnov, Cooperation of German, Silesian and Czech rescue service from 1936.

name, though, Mountain Rescue Service. The organization and the management were changing according to the organization of physical education and tourism in postwar Czechoslovakia.

Abbreviations

RČS – Republika Československá – The Republic of Czechoslovakia

KČsT – Klub Československých Turistů – The club of Czechoslovakian tourists

KRNAP – Krkonošský Národní Park – The Giant Mountain National Park

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