

Alpine huts: Architectural innovations and development in the High Tatras in the second half of the 20th century

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Abstract: The innovative 20th century brought many problems, but it brought many solutions too. The problems architecture was trying to handle at the time were no longer solvable with traditional methods. The world learned about new architectural movements like post-war modernism, brutalism, high-tech architecture, and postmodernism. However, there were places where innovative tendencies were implemented at a slower rate, with some delay, or not at all. The paper analyses buildings built in the alpine territories of the High Tatras in former Czechoslovakia and examines three typologies of huts: small huts, large-capacity huts, and huts transformed into mountain hotels. The research concentrates on huts and the innovations through the process of architectural planning, changes and adaptations of newly-built objects, extensions of the existing and reconstruction of decayed huts and also on the never built projects. The main focus is on the huts Chata pri Popradskom plese, Sliezsky dom, Chata pod Rysmi, Chata pri Zelenom plese and Kežmarská chata. The building process of the huts is explained in the social and political context with the notion of the second half of the 20th century paradigm. It was the era shaped by post-war recovery, architecture for the masses, television, exploration of eight-thousanders and space trips. In the second half of the 20th century, Czechoslovakia was under Soviet control with the command or planned economy. The paper explores the phenomena of the period, examining the effect they had on the care for the huts and what happened after the revolution in 1989. Despite the lack of architectural interventions in the alpine territories, the paper found examples of socialist realism, post-war modernism, and high-tech ideas in the architecture of the High Tatras highest terrains.

Keywords: alpine architecture, post war modernism, innovations, High Tatras, hut, Czechoslovakia

MODERNISM IN THE LANDSCAPE

This study is based on the research of the High Tatras building history in the second half of the 20th century in former Czechoslovakia. The main focus is on the typology of alpine huts and the process of their architectural planning. The paper aims to clarify the processes behind the huts' development and analyse their place in the architectural debate. The study describes how architects apply the architectural ideas of post-war modernism in the high-altitude environment. What was the decisive factor, the mountain wind, the architect's ego, or the investor's finances?

Alpine huts were not a typical assignment for architects. In the past, Alpine huts in Slovakia did not reflect innovative architectural ideas. Instead, they were based on the knowledge of traditional civil engineering and more conservative design practices. We assume the trend continued during the second half of the 20th century. Architects still faced problems such as extreme environment, rough terrain, and distance from the urbanised environment. The use of helicopters could be seen as a solution to the problem of transporting building materials. As regards

new transport possibilities, we expect the utilisation of new materials like thermal insulation and waterproofing to solve the problems of extreme climate. The paper explores the influence of architectonic movements such as socialist realism, post-war modernism, high-tech and postmodernism on the architecture of the Tatra huts. Which influences have affected the architecture of the buildings in the mountains? Has the architecture been influenced by urban trends, has it elaborated on vernacular architecture, or has it gone its own way?

The development of Tatra huts in the second half of the 20th century was influenced by social phenomena such as the nationalisation of accommodation facilities (under Czechoslovak Act no. 124/1948 Coll.) and mass recreation (under Section 28 of Czechoslovak Constitutional Act no. 150/1948 Coll.), which resulted in mass tourism. In the past, the huts within the tourist network of the High Tatras were owned by tourist associations or private individuals. After the nationalisation, they were placed under the administration of national enterprises, which were subject to frequent reorganisation, and the management of the huts was (ir)regularly changed. Did the disruptions to the continuity in the management affect the fate of the huts? (Fig. 1)

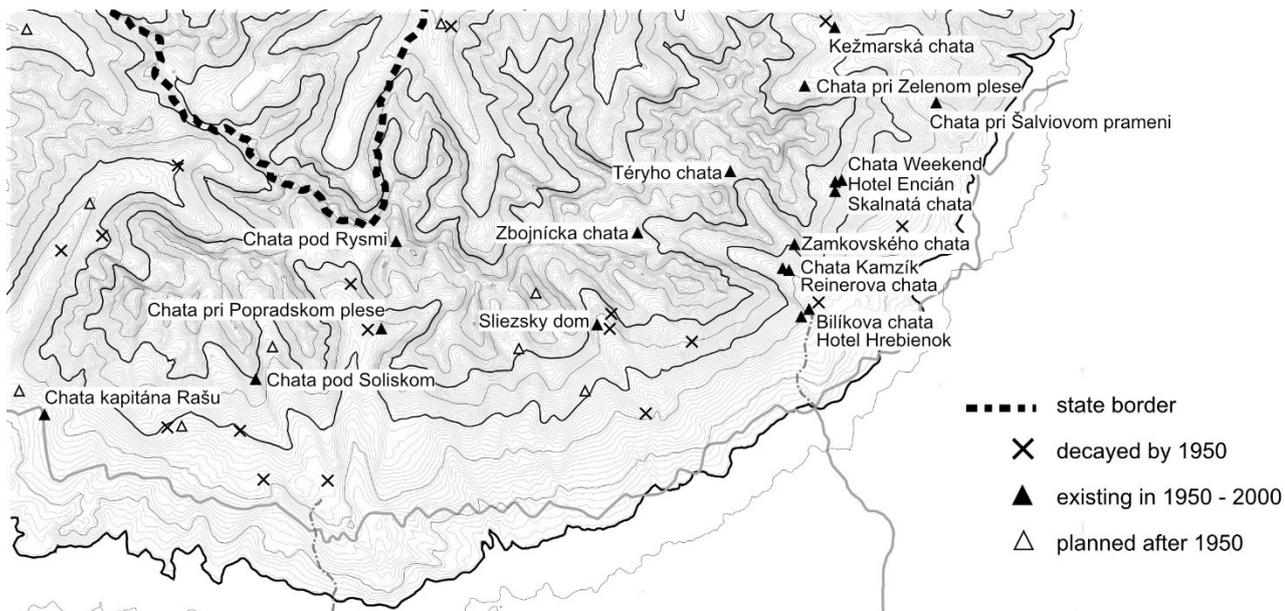


Fig. 1. A map of the High Tatras displaying the status of huts in the period between 1950 and 2000. (Source: Novotná, 2022)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The architecture of the Tatra huts has not been the main focus of interest of scientific research by architects yet. However, some historiographical works, short studies or sections in complex scientific publications analyse building activities in the high mountain environment. They are mostly publications in which Tatra architecture was part of a broader assessment of Slovak architecture. In holistic publications, authors Henrieta Moravčíková and Matúš Dulla (Dulla, Moravčíková, 2002) describe the approach to construction in the Tatras in the context of the 20th century architecture in Slovakia. A deeper understanding of the context of the second half of the 20th century is presented in the publication *Modern and/or Totalitarian in the Architecture of the 20th Century in Slovakia* (Moravčíková, Szalay, Dulla, Topolčanská, Potočár, Haberlandová, 2013). The search for the form of Tatra architecture against the background of social changes is explored by Henrieta Moravčíková (Moravčíková, 2013). An immediate assessment of Tatra architecture is offered by Matúš Dulla's study from 1989 (Dulla, 1989) and his reflection on the same issue thirty years later (Dulla, 2019). Huts are described as a base for hiking activities in the publication *Tatranské chaty majúky v mori skál a snehu* (Bohuš, 2011). A comprehensive publication *Vysoké Tatry včera a dnes* (Kollárová, 2017) provides a holistic approach to the region of the High Tatras. Other sources include reviews of specific buildings in specialised Slovak periodicals, especially *Projekt*, *Vysoké Tatry* and *Krásy Slovenska*.

This research was based on the abovementioned publications, historical postcards and photographs, and archival materials. Individual building objects were identified by analysing historical maps and tourist guides. The sources for the huts Chata pri Zelenom plese and Kežmarská chata from the project documentation of the ŠPTÚ (State Project and Typification Institute) are from the archive of Michal Legutky. A field survey was a tool used to verify the huts' position and their change in status compared to the analysed situation. The survey, combined with interviews with the hut keepers, clarified some aspects of the existence of a hut in the mountain environment and the interactions between huts. In the study, the authors use the word 'alpine' which does not necessarily refer to the Alps, but to alpine terrain and environment in general. Individual objects are referred to by their current or most recent name, not by their

original name. Plan schemes, views and isometries are based on archival material and historical photographs.

MODERNISM IN THE ALPINE TERRAIN

After the Second World War, the High Tatras were to become the most important recreational centre for the war-decimated population (Kollárová, Šlampová, Janigová, 2017, p. 149). Subsequently, after nationalization, all the recreation, wellness and tourism facilities became the property of the public. Natural wealth was perceived in the same way. Recreation and tourism were supposed to "prepare the broad masses of workers for highly productive socialist work and the defence of the fatherland." (Viktory, 1955, p. 402) The High Tatras' importance and exceptional landscape were acknowledged by the establishment of the Tatra National Park (TANAP) in 1949. In 1950, the implementation of the five-year plan for construction in the High Tatras began. (Kollárová, Šlampová, Janigová, 2017, p. 151) One of the planned activities was the construction of a resort and a cable car to the peak Gerlachovský štít. The long-term construction plan envisaged the building of eight new huts, the renovation of 3 decayed huts, and the reconstruction of 5 Tatra huts, whose final capacity was to rise from 700 to 2850 beds. The required increase in capacity explains the trend towards organized mass tourism, whose focus is on "the mass" and not "the increase of the performance of experienced tourists". (Viktory, 1955, p. 402) We assume that these principles were supposed to prevent the adulation for idols from the capitalist world, whose climbers managed to climb 7 of the 14 eight-thousanders in 1955. However, climbers from Czechoslovakia did not manage to climb the first eight-thousanders until 1971.

Socialist realism for masses (1948-1960)

The Tatra huts as tourist facilities were nationalised. They became part of the national enterprise "Tatranské hotely komunálny podnik" (Tatra huts communal enterprise) in 1951; a year later, the enterprise was merged with the enterprise "Hostiteľský a ubytovací komunálny podnik" (Hosting and accommodation communal enterprise) and renamed to "Tatranské chaty a pohostinské závody" (Tatra huts and hospitality facilities, TCHPZ). Subsequently, in 1953, the national enterprise "Turista" (The Tourist) was established, which took over the agenda of TCHPZ and other enterprises that organised recrea-

tion and tourism in the High Tatras. (Kollárová, Šlampová, Janigová, 2017, pp. 150-154) The condition of huts in the High Tatras after the Second World War was better than in other mountain ranges, as during the war, the researched network of Tatra huts lost only two huts (1943 Krivánska chata, 1944 Važecká chata), but during the '50s four more huts disappeared from the map. Guhrova chata fell into disrepair in the early '50s, Furkotská chata burnt down in 1956, and the huts Chata pri Šalviovom prameni and Majláthova chata were in such a condition that by the beginning of the '60s, they had to be demolished. Other huts underwent necessary repairs, and central heating was installed in most of them. (Bohuš, 2011)

The first step towards the realisation of the plan from 1950 was the construction of a new hut at the lakeside Popradské pleso, the most visited place in the High Tatras. An architectural competition for the new hut was announced in 1956. The competition brief was to draw up a conceptual design that would serve as a basis for supplementing the hut network with a large-capacity object. The jury found the connection to the mountain, to the terrain and the climatic conditions to be essential. They considered developing a proposal "without regard to the other huts". The competition proposal was to be reflected in the materials chosen, which were also to reflect "traditional local conditions" but have a "contemporary expression". (Blablo, 1956, p. 253) According to the periodical "Krásy Slovenska", the competition participants were: Bauer and Čapka; E. Bednárová; M. Krukovská, Ďurkovič, Svetko, Vician; Ficker and Drahoš; Begán; Špitzer. There was no winner, but two proposals were placed second. The first of the two was proposed by architect E. Bednárová (Štefánia Krumlová), and the second one by Bauer and Čapka.

In the end, the jury recommended the implementation of the project by the architects from Žilina's Stavoprojekt, Ladislav Bauer and Ferdinand Čapka, based on "their practical experience with the construction of several Tatra huts in Slovakia" (Blablo, 1956, p. 255). Architect Krumlová also confirms this version of the two-second place proposals and the selection of older architects in an interview for the daily Pravda (Gahérová, 2017). The review of the competition proposal by the "more experienced architects" praised the connection to the terrain and the proportion but questioned the hut placement too close to the lake. The review expressed objections to the layout and questioned the structural height and the deep double tract. Overall, the design was assessed as a building whose "alpine character [...] veers into romanticism and even formalism [...]". While the design of the "young architect" Krumlová was evaluated as "properly oriented with well-managed views and refined architectural expression." The layout was particularly criticised for its undersized volume. However, the connections between the spaces were highlighted. (Blablo, 1956, pp. 255-256, Fig. 2)

The question whether the factors that influenced the choice of the final hut designers were only their experience or the proximity of Žilina to the building site or the preference for the men's collective remains unanswered for the time being. Projekt, Revue of Slovak architecture, published a review by Martin Oríšek, where neither the name of the architect Krumlová nor her maiden name (Bednárová) nor the fact that the first prize was not awarded and two proposals were placed second is mentioned. According to the article, architects Bauer and Čapka were the only winners. The review mentions the building as a romantic hut that blends in with the environment in which it is set. The author of the review attributes the romanticism of the hut to the architectural trend of the time, socialist realism, but adds that in spite of it, the hut is sensitively set and "has an appropriate scale." (Oríšek, 1963, pp. 128-129)

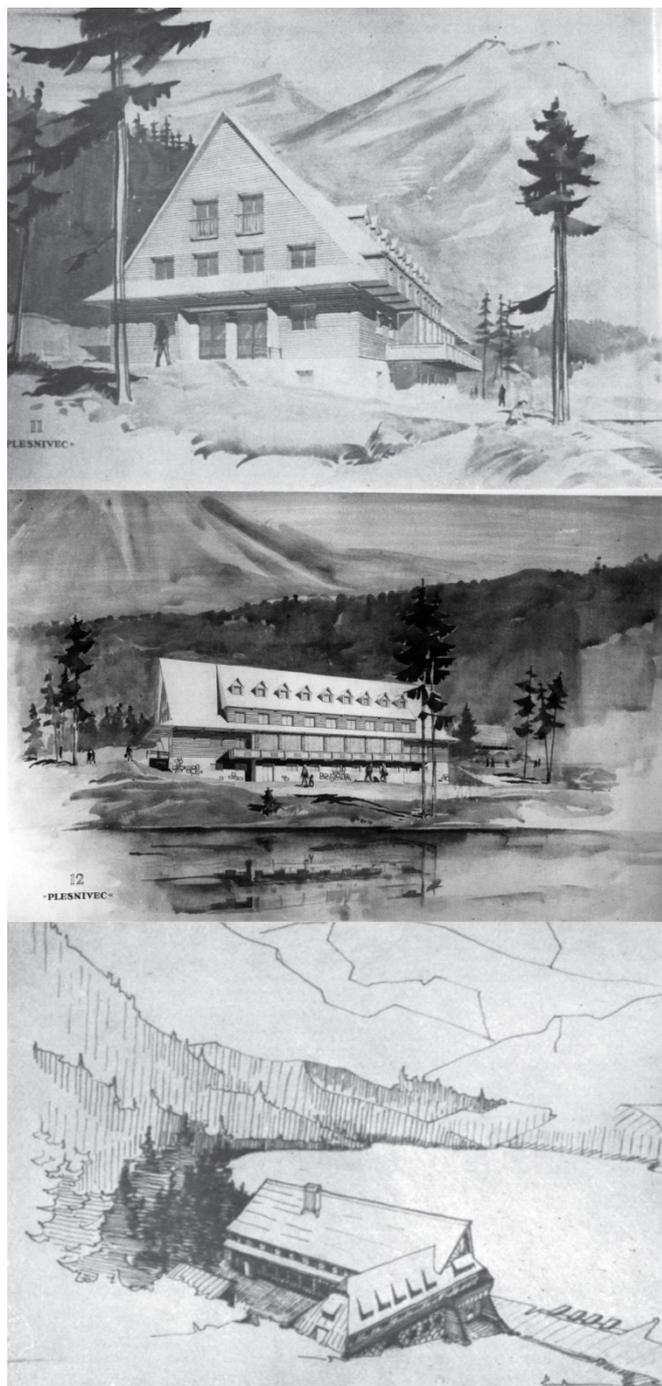


Fig. 2. Chata pri Popradskom plese. Perspectives from competition proposals show the similarities and the differences between the two. Top to bottom: Krumlová east perspective, Krumlová south-east perspective, Bauer and Čapka north-west perspective. (Source: Blablo, 1956)

The problem of too-small volume in the design by architect Krumlová was solved by Bauer and Čapka already in the competition in the "L" plan form. The layout results in the "closing off of the backyard from intrusive views". The longer part is set in the ground in the direction of the terrain contours and offers an "overlook of the lake". While the opinion expressed in the competition regarding the "elongated shape" of the dining room is questioned, the possibility of this type of interior separating the section during the "off-season" is highlighted. In the comments on the hut's design, Ladislav Bauer only focuses on the second part of the assessment, namely that "the division of the dining room into two parts in the off-season eliminates the feeling of emptiness". In the same article, there is a comment regarding

the entrance, which is "controllable" and allows "passage to the hall, conservatory and main wing of the dining room". (Bauer, 1957, pp. 34-35) Such a positive review of the layout is found in the architect Krumlova's competition proposal review, where "the positioning of the reception room allows good control of the access to all rooms from the hall." (Blablo, 1956) Based on the analysed texts and the available competition documents, we can say that the realised form of the hut followed the intentions of the competition design by Bauer and Čapka. However, the final project may be a hybrid of the two top placed competition designs.

If the intention of the authors was "to follow the architecture of our (Slovak) wooden houses in the romantic concept" (Bauer, 1957, p. 35), the hut could be considered to be one of the first contributions of post-war architecture to the architectural discussion that was "to embody the legacy of Slovak folk in a modern concept" (Dulla, 2019, p. 332). This idea is confirmed by a statement referring to the hut as "a prime example of the transformation of folk building motives" (Dulla, 1989, p. 10). However, the review strongly questions the location, which exploits the mountain environment. The author later compares its "great volume" to "the more spacious dwellings of the German ethnic group." (Dulla, 2019, p. 332, Fig. 3, 4)

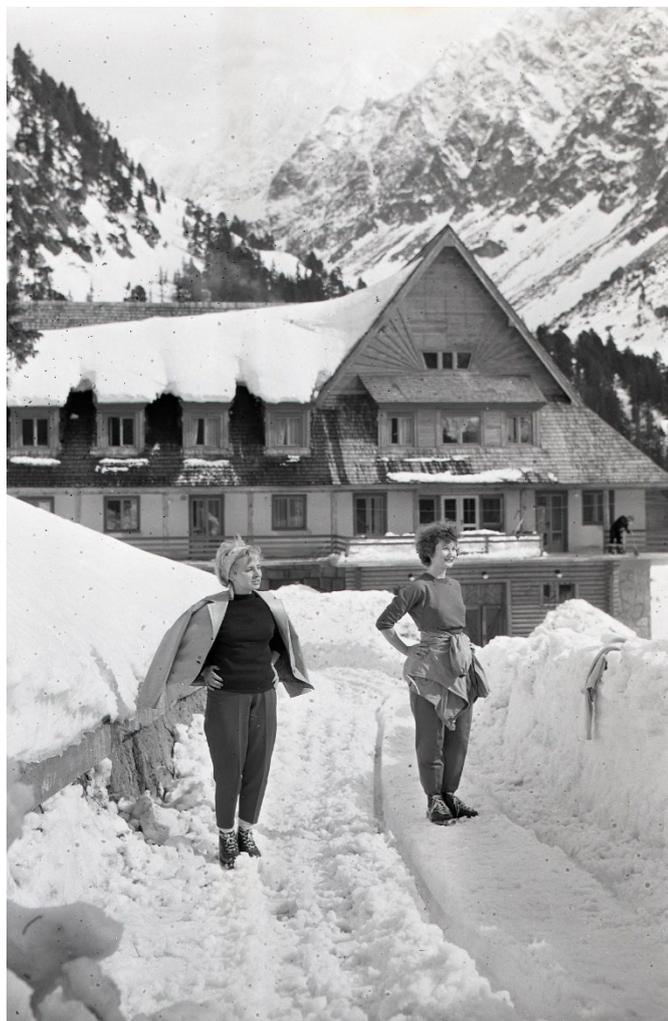


Fig. 3 (left). Chata pri Popradskom plese. Original state, east perspective. (Source: TASR, 1962)



Fig. 4. Chata pri Popradskom plese. Current state, east perspective. (Source: Novotná, 2022)

Post-war modernism in alpine terrain (1961-1970)

Post-war modernity appeared in the High Tatras with the constantly growing need to increase the capacity and standard of recreational facilities. The culmination of the architectural work of that decade was devoted to developing a complex infrastructure for the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships 1970 (FIS70). Little attention was paid to the huts, the most noticeable objects of tourism in the High Tatras. In 1962, the "Turista" company, which managed the huts, was divided into the Tatra Hotels and the Interhotel Tatry. The buildings assigned to the Tatra Hotels were in poor condition, while the Interhotel Tatry managed the most prosperous facilities in the High Tatras. The huts became part of the less prosperous Tatra Hotels (Kollárová, Šlampová, Janigová, 2017, p. 155), which took on a difficult task: the reconstruction of Sliezsky dom (Silesian House). The previous reconstruction (1959), which concentrated mainly on the electrification, had been financed by the Turista company. In 1962 the hut burnt down. (Bohuš, 2011, p. 61)

The hut was originally built in 1895 and has been expanded several times. In the 1950s, the interior was renovated and connected to public utilities. After the 1959 rebuilding, Sliezsky dom had the capacity of 103 beds. (Bohuš, 2011, p. 61, Fig. 5)

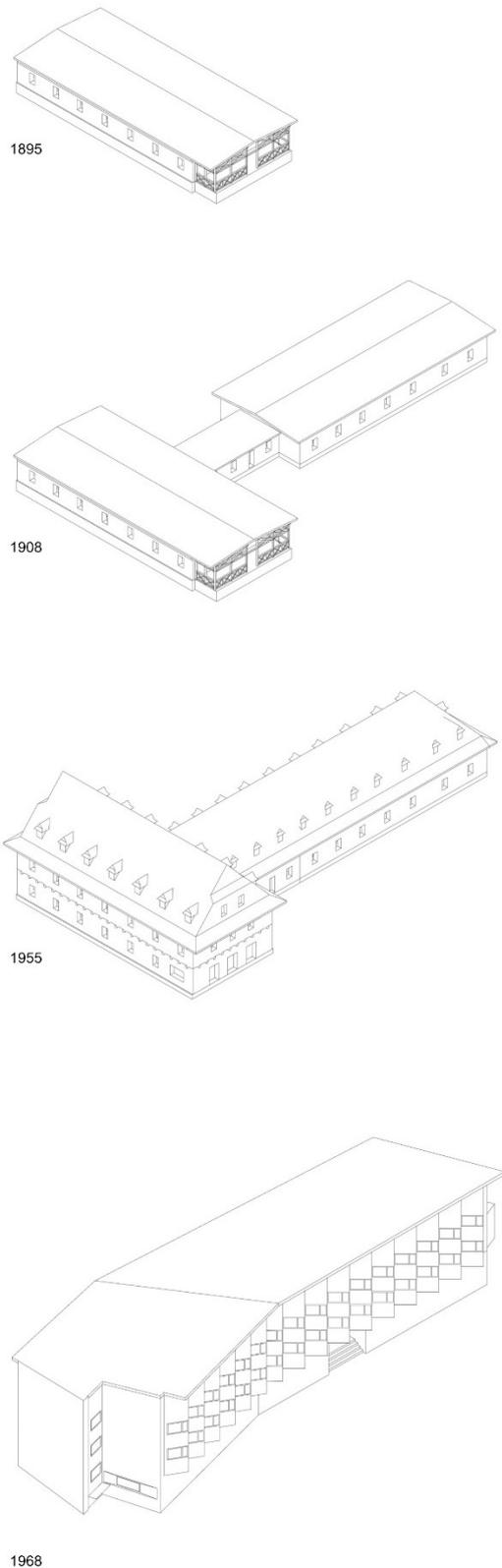


Fig. 5. Isometric diagram of the Sliezsky dom evolution. It displays the extensions to the original hut building in line with the tradition of craftsmanship and new architectural approach to the new volume. (Source: Novotná, 2022)

The location of the original Sliezsky dom was subject to criticism due to the lack of sunlight and the inadequate mass, which

was completely covered with snow during winter. A guideline for a redesign could have suggested moving the building to a position more suitable in terms of illumination, but this was rejected because of the existing in-ground utilities. (V. G., 1963, p. 17) During the negotiations (1963) concerning the restoration of Sliezsky dom, the capacity of approximately 50 beds and 120 chairs in the dining room was first considered. The TANAP management even agreed to build a ski lift in the valley Velická dolina. During the construction (1968), the capacity was increased to 124 beds and 380 chairs. The rooms had projected washbasins, shower rooms and toilets. (Čejka, 1966, p. 23, Fig. 6)

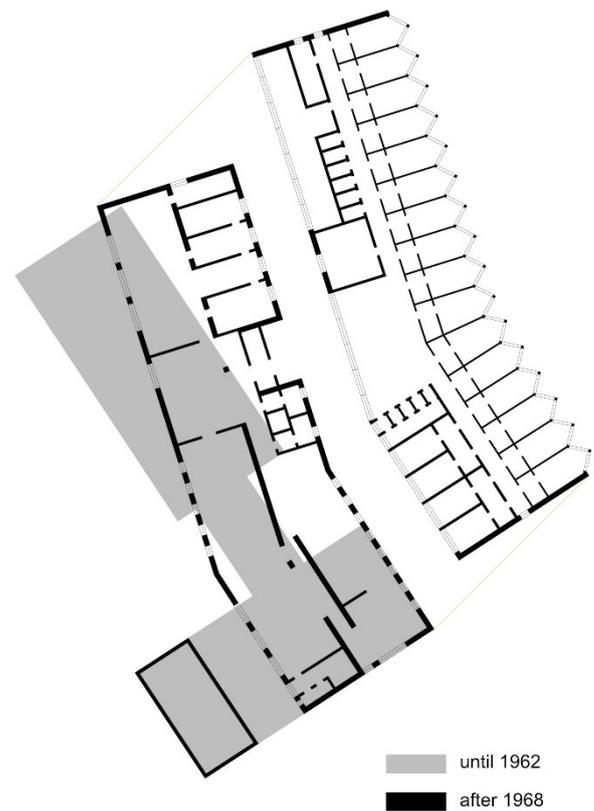


Fig. 6. Scheme of the Sliezsky dom development in 1955 and 1969. The new volume (black blueprint) deviates from the original one (grey footprint), but also follows it. (Source: Novotná, 2022)

The new building was constructed as a compact, slightly bent mountain hotel by architect Jaromír Sirotek from the State Design Institute of Trade (ŠPTÚO) Brno and opened in 1968 (Kos, 2021, p. 55). The innovative approach is based on the type of construction used in an alpine environment. The mountain hotel is constructed as a reinforced concrete structure with a steel frame and wooden cladding of the facade at an altitude of 1670m above sea level. Plastic insulation was used in the project to allow a return to a flat roof. The roof structure was to be an adaptation to an alpine environment where snow would be blown off the flat roof, and the structure was to withstand gusting winds (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. East elevation of Sliezsky dom in 1969, in the morning light. (Source: Novotná, 2022)

A year after the opening of the Silesian House, its modernist form was accepted and referred to as an "imposing building" (Kováčik, 1966, p. 29); however, in contemporary responses, it is reflected as more of an "expressively controversial mass" (Bujna, 2013; Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Slezský dom, 2021, in the afternoon light. (Source: Novotná, 2021)

Reorganisation of mass tourism (1971-1980)

In the High Tatras, the period of normalisation was accompanied with intensification of mass tourism, the popularity of which increased exponentially after the successful FIS70. In order to make it possible for the hotel complexes to invest and develop, the tourism facilities had to undergo yet another reorganisation. The reorganization of tourism enterprises had an impact on huts in 1971 when Interhotel Tatry merged with Tatra Hotels and Interhotel Košice. The enterprise with prestigious hotel facilities only kept Slezský dom, Bilíkova chata and Horský hotel Popradské pleso. The other huts were incorporated into a newly established enterprise, Oblastná správa účelových telovýchovných zariadení slovenskej telovýchovnej organizácie so sídlom v Novom Smokovci (the Regional Administration of Special Purpose Sports Facilities of the Slovak Sports Organisation based in Nový Smokovec).

In 1972, they were renamed to Tatranská správa účelových zariadení slovenskej organizácie československého zväzu telovýchovy so sídlom v Novom Smokovci (Tatra Administration of Special Purpose Facilities of the Slovak Organization of the Czechoslovak Sports Union with headquarters in Nový Smokovec, TSUZSOČSZTV). (Kollárová, Šlampová, Janigová, 2017, pp. 167-169) In that decade, the capacity of accommodation in the alpine environment decreased significantly. Several Tatra huts were closed down due to their poor condition (Skalnatá chata, chata Kamzík). As regards the hut Chata kpt. Rašu, its purpose was changed to a recreation centre of the OD PRIOR company and it stopped serving the general public. The eastern side of the High Tatras lost a hut in 1974, when Kežmarská chata burnt down. However, the issue of disrepair had to be addressed by the competent authorities also in case of the highest-located hut in Czechoslovakia (Fig. 9).

The hut Chata pod Rysmi, built by Jozef Šašinka between 1931 and 1932, was built on an avalanche slope of local granite with a flat roof. A significant structural change occurred in 1977 when the hut was extended with a superstructure. The initial study was prepared by Milan Marenčák (1975), and the project by Igor Petro. (Repka, 1978, p. 21) The architects faced problems such as a short construction period, limited possibilities of transporting materials, the problem of waste disposal, insufficient space for efficient service and the avalanche threat.

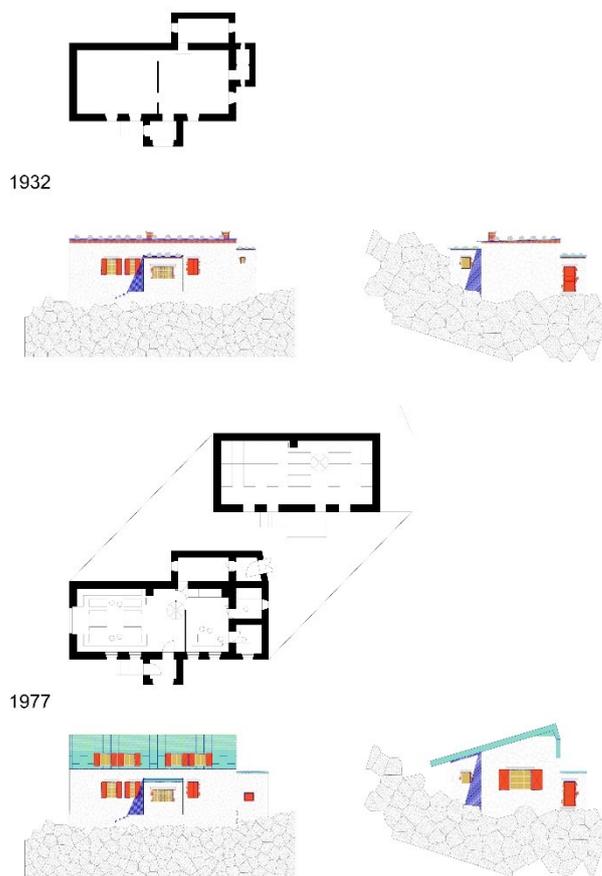


Fig. 9. Evolution of the hut Chata pod Rysmi. 1932 – 1977. The horizontal extension follows the logic of original building techniques and local materials, while the vertical extension introduces new materials and new expression. (Source: Novotná, 2022)



Fig. 10. Small intervention concerning Chata pod Rysmi in the form of sheathed superstructure. The façade remained without change, blending into the surrounding environment. (Source: TASR, 1986)

The volume of reconstruction work was effectively reduced to

the necessary functional minimum. It was completed in 4 months thanks to the help of climbers and a helicopter used for the material transportation. Waste disposal was left without an upgrade. In the renovation, the hut was enlarged with added storage space and a hut keeper's room. The lodging area was moved from the dining room to the superstructure (Fig. 10). It was the superstructure in the form of a lean-to roof that was supposed to serve as avalanche protection (Repka, 1978, p. 22), which, as it turned out later, was not sufficiently dimensioned. Chata pod Rysmi thus followed the trend huts with sheathed superstructures in the mountain environment, which can also be seen in the realization of the superstructure of the hut Chata M. R. Štefánika pod Ďumbierom in the Low Tatras (Jozef Jahn, project 1973, realization 1974-1976) and later in the superstructure of the hotel at Hrebienok (Bystrický, Mihálik, project 1988, realization 1999).

Unbuilt modernity (1980-1990)

In the 1980s, the Tatras were targeted by mass tourism, which exceeded tolerable limits. Regulations were introduced, which resulted in the reduced income of individual establishments that failing to meet the required planned limits. The Tatra huts were facilities that could have increased the income of recreational tourism establishments. This is probably why the discussion concerning the scope of construction in the alpine environment mainly focused on the renovation of the hut Kežmarská chata. The first project for a new hut was drawn up by architects Ludovít Jendreják, Ján Šilinger and architect Olga Babjaková at the Štátny projektový a typizačný ústav (State Project and Typification Institute, ŠPTÚ) in 1984. It was to be a south-facing hut with a large lean-to roof with a capacity of 55 beds (the TANAP administration saw no reason to build a facility for more than 20) and 150 chairs.

The lean-to roof was to touch the ground and trap snow during the winter, which was to serve as additional thermal insulation. Innovative features such as glulam beam construction, triple-glazed windows, and wind power (even if only as a back-up) were to be supplemented with more conservative façade materials. The ground floor was to have the appearance of a stone plinth, and incorporate some stonework from the remains of the old hut, and the rest of the south elevation was to be clad in timber shingles. All materials were to be transported to the site by helicopter, which meant standardisation at the level of building structure preparation. All the individual parts of the building elements could not exceed the weight of 2 tonnes. This proposal was not realised, and neither were the two subsequent ones, which came out of the SIAL, architects and engineers' association in Liberec, at the turn of 1984-1985 (Fig. 11).

The first linear variant by Jiří Suchomel and the second, circular, by Martin Nemeč, remained on paper. The innovativeness of Liberec's designs consisted in adapting the structure and materiality of the hut to the new paradigm of high-tech architecture and the emerging postmodernism, which translated into the concept of energy efficiency of buildings. The architects and engineers designed a façade in computer software that would be able to distribute heat gains from sunny days. Both SIAL proposals featured Jozef Franc as the structural engineer. (Suchomel, 1987, pp. 38-40) Although the design of Kežmarská chata was not realised, the reconstruction of another hut, Zbojnická chata, was carried out in cooperation with members of SIAL. The authors of the project were Karel Novotný (Švácha, 2010, p. 155) and Jozef Franc (Bohuš, 2011, p. 89) and, as other sources claim, also Igor Petro (Dulla, 1989, p. 10). The positives of the reconstruction consisted mainly in the improvement of the service areas and the upgrade of the hut's equipment. However, the SIALists' signature, futuristic experiment with form

and material, with emphasis on the energy efficiency of the building structure, was reduced to solar collectors. The Jendrelák Šilinger Babjaková project team developed another yet-unrealised project, but this one was for a hut Chata pri Zelenom please. The hut design was based on the original concept of a "knoll-like hut", which was elaborated into a more complex and spacious idea with a sophisticated layout of a large-capacity hut. The hut's design was explicitly atypical, not only from the structural but also from the layout point of view (Fig. 12).

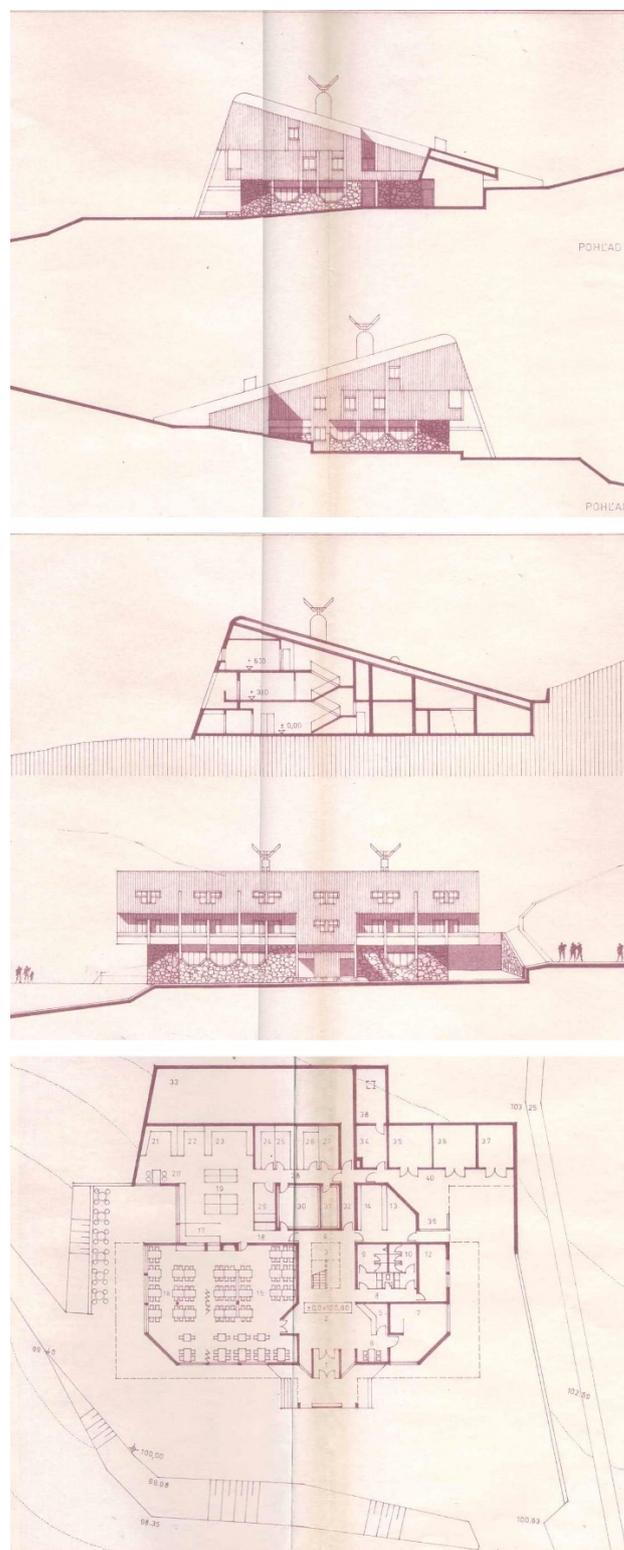


Fig. 11. Kežmarská chata proposal, 1984. Authors: Ludovít Jendreják, Ján Šilinger, and Olga Babjaková, ŠPTÚ Bratislava. Top to bottom: east elevation, west elevation, cross-section, south elevation, plan of the first floor. (Source: Legutky, 1984)

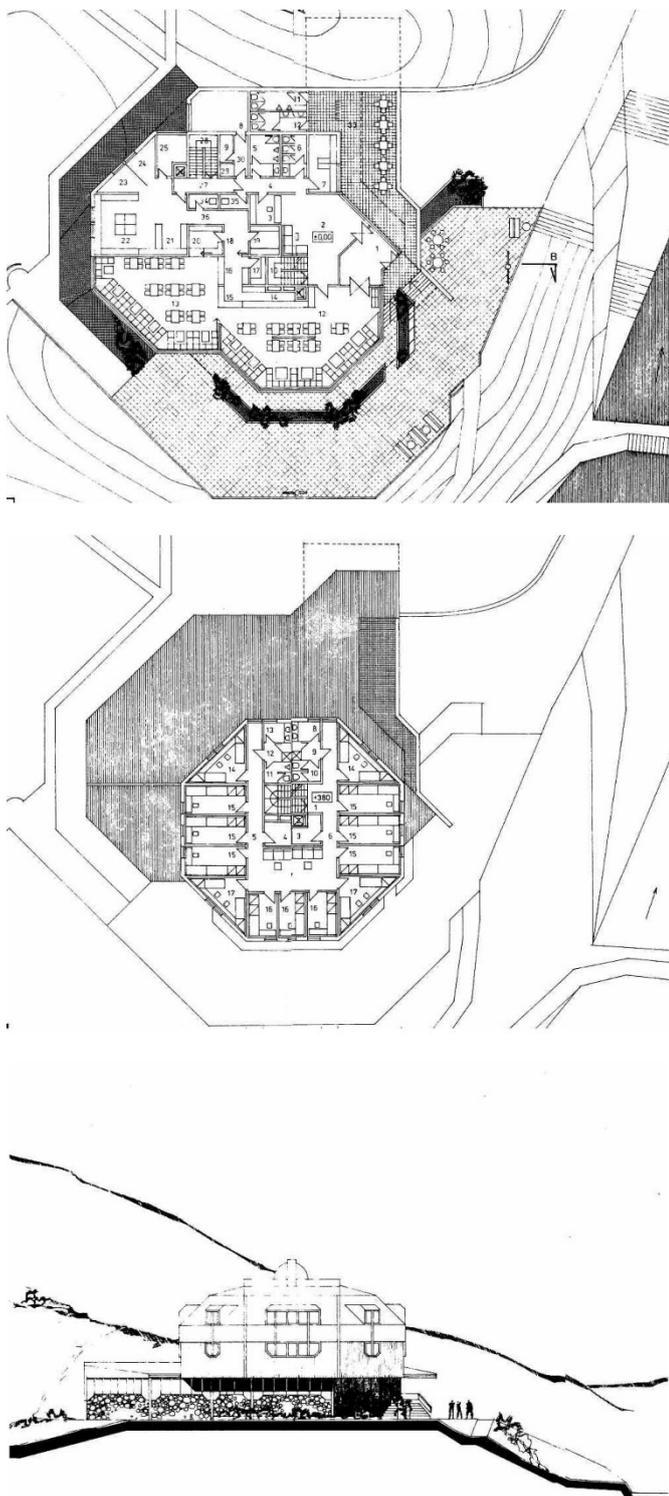


Fig. 12. Chata pri Zelenom plese proposal, 1985. Authors: Ludovít Jendreják, Ján Šilinger and Olga Babjaková, ŠPTÚ Bratislava. Top to bottom: plan of the first floor, plan of the second floor, west elevation. (Source: Legutky, 1985)

Commercialisation (1991-2000)

The change in the social system and the privatisation of state-owned property after 1989 also resulted in changes in the ownership of the huts and influenced their management. The renewed hiking associations tried to regain ownership of the huts, and those built by individuals before 1948 were claimed by the descendants of the former owners. Under the administration of Tatra Administration of Special Purpose Facilities of the Slovak Organization of the Czechoslovak Sports Union, the rest of the huts became the property of the hiking and mountaineering club again. However, the huts managed by Interhotel Tatry were

privatised and sold to private companies. Apart from administrative activities, there were cautious attempts at the building management of individual huts, depending on their popularity. Bilíková chata reduced its capacity but increased its standard, the operation of the preserved Rainerova chata was renewed, the burnt-out Zbojnická chata was renovated, and Skalnatá chata was reopened. Perhaps the most curious reconstruction was the hut Chata pod Soliskom, located at the last stop of the Štrbské pleso - Solisko cable car. After privatisation, its new owners decided to improve its thermal properties but did not want to demolish the hut. Therefore, when the hut was fully operational, they rebuilt it and dismantled the old structure. The effort to improve the thermal properties is also reflected in the trend to replace windows with ones with plastic frames. In the case of many buildings, this is a replacement that nostalgically tries to hold on to the previous 'hut' aesthetics, and the windows are retrofitted. The false nostalgia creates a pretend atmosphere of the past, in which there was no notable support for the development of the huts.

HIGH TATRAS, LANDSCAPE OF MODERNISM

Until the second half of the 20th century, the typology of the huts in the alpine environment developed almost independently of the foothill's architectural trends and urban areas. Socialist realism, which appeared in the territory of post-war Czechoslovakia in the 1950s, can be partially identified in the hut Chata pri Popradskom plese. (According to Oríšek, scale-transcending) Socialist realism of the hut can be characterised as a romanticising vernacular offshoot with a scale that does not transcend the context. The post-war modernism in the alpine terrain could be seen in the hut Sliezsky dom (Silezian House). With its rhythmic façade, the hut seems to be responding to the functionalist Morava Recreation Centre (1933) by another Brno architect, Bohuslav Fuchs. A similar formal treatment of form and materiality can be seen in Labská Bouda (1975) by architect Zdeněk Řihák, who, like Sirotek, was part of ŠPTÚO Brno. Chata pod Rysmi does not follow any specific line of post-war modernism. However, the hut is an example of the importance of architectural design that effectively combines spatial demands, economic and transport constraints with the structural and material essence in an alpine environment. A glimpse of the holistic input of architectural opinion influenced by the direction of high-tech architecture is shown by the proposals of the SIAL for Kežmarská chata in which innovative and progressive architectural design practices were applied in the spatial and material concept of an energy-efficient hut building, including experiments with PC software in the 80s.

The architectural solutions of the huts in the High Tatras were not self-referential. They responded to building activities within and outside the High Tatras and innovations applied in foothill settlements and towns. In the case of more conservative solutions, architecture gave other meanings or expressions to the traditional materials and established building methods. Unlike the Alpine environment, the High Tatras do not reflect the trends of typified mountain huts or the application of prefabricated elements. In the Alpine environment during the 19th century, elements were standardised and then prefabricated in a valley and brought to the site. (Gibello, 2011, p. 37) In the context of standardisation, only the weight and volume of material that can be carried to the site by helicopter and carried up by a mountain porter were considered. We cannot predict how the architecture would have evolved if the continuity of care for the huts had not been permanently disrupted. However, both this phenomenon and tourism have caused many non-conceptual disruptions to the identity of the Tatra alpine architecture. Architects' interventions mostly meant the transformation of small huts into large-capacity huts or hotel-like structures. The common denominator that shaped the image of the Tatra huts were

ad hoc extensions, architecture without architects and temporary buildings that became permanent.

Nowadays, we can observe how cottages have been changing under the increasing pressure of tourism. The most notable developments are in the day-stay and catering areas. Dining rooms are often expanded with added outdoor terraces. The terraces are then roofed over and, in the final stage, enclosed with light walls. Such ad hoc extensions are not unique even in the Alpine region. The mountain huts have gradually been turned into mountain buffets, and their purpose of providing shelter for climbers has changed to that of a mountain restaurant. (Dini, Girodo, 2018) These modifications are usually done without the involvement of an architect and they often do not follow, either logically or aesthetically, the qualities of the original building. However, we can unequivocally confirm that the presence of an architect in the planning process, even if limited, is definitely beneficial. The paper also shows that the High Tatras alpine environment (might) became home to exceptional architectural designs. The architects could propose innovative and sophisticated solutions and respond to the problems that both the huts and the hut keepers face on a daily basis. Thanks to all the circumstances that prevented the expansion of the capacity of the Tatra huts to 2850 beds, the mountains continue to be seen as a place offering the unique experience of being at the higher altitudes.

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