



Operation Anthropoid



ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ
OBEC LEGIONÁŘSKÁ

Rota
NaZar



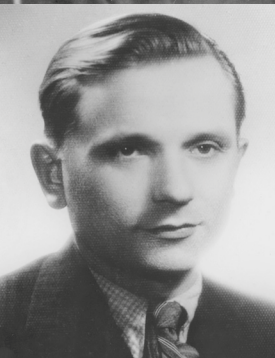
MINISTERSTVO OBRANY
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ANTHROPOID – RETALIATION FOR NAZI TERROR

In 1938, Czechoslovakia was forced by the Munich Agreement to surrender its border territory and on 15th March, 1939, its remains were occupied by Germany. On March 16th, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was officially declared by Adolf Hitler's decree. During the first hours of occupation the Nation's Defence movement was established. It prepared an armed uprising and organized the departure of soldiers into exile. On 27th September 1941, Reinhard Heydrich arrived in Prague to replace the protector Constantine Freiherr von Neurath. Heydrich became a direct representative of the Führer in the territory of Bohemia and Moravia. A wave of terror broke out immediately after his arrival. Only a day after taking office on 28th September 1941 Generals Josef Bílý and Hugo Vojta were executed.

On 3rd October 1941 in London, intelligence officers led by Col. Frantisek Moravec decided to take a retaliatory action. The target was meant to be either Karl Hermann Frank or Reinhard Heydrich. The attack date was symbolically set on October 28th. The operation was named ANTHROPOID and was to be carried out by a pair of well-trained soldiers who would be parachuted in the occupied territory. The successful graduates of the special courses were Josef Gabčík and Karel Svoboda. Subsequently, both were sent for additional ground-based training, during which Svoboda was injured and could no longer continue. Gabčík replaced him with Rot. Jan Kubiš. Due to unfavourable circumstances, the operation was temporarily postponed.



JOSEF GABČÍK

Josef Gabčík was born on 8th April 1912 in the village Poluvsie, Žilina district. At the age of fourteen he left for South Bohemia and acquired the skill of blacksmithing and locksmithery. On 1st October 1932, he enlisted in the 12th Company, 3rd Battalion of the Infantry Regiment 14 in Košice. In Prešov he graduated from an NCO school and signed a three-year contract as a long-serving NCO. In 1937, he was released to the Military Chemical Factory; which had been producing combat chemical substances; in Žilina. In autumn 1938, he suffered serious poisoning by inhaling the vapours of yperite. At the end of the year he was transferred to the warehouse in Sv. Beňadik as an army warehouse manager. After the establishment of sovereign Slovak state, he refused to give Germans access to the warehouse. He stole two pistols along with other equipment to be able to cross the Polish border and join an emerging foreign army in Krakow. Through Malé Bronovice and the port of Gdynia, he got to France, where he signed a five-year contract to the Foreign Legion with a promise that if war breaks out he would be released for the emerging Czechoslovak troops, which happened in September 1939. As a member of the 1. Infantry Regiment he took part in heavy fighting at Gien, where our soldiers held the crossing over river Loire. Gabčík ordered a retreat of heavy machine guns and ammunition for which he was later awarded the Czechoslovak War Cross. After his evacuation to England, he was selected for special operations in his homeland and together with Karel Svoboda for the operation ANTHROPOID.



JAN KUBIŠ

Jan Kubiš was born on 24th June 1913 in Dolní Vilémovice. In 1919, his mother died during childbirth and his father remarried a widow, Marie Dušíková. He was raised by his mother's relatives who lived in Ptáčov. At the age of fourteen he left for work. He worked as a coachman in the woods, then as a stoker in a nearby brickyard. Despite difficult living conditions, he was brought up to patriotism and was a member of the Christian gymnastic organization Eagle. Kubiš started a two-year military service on 1st October 1935, in the 9th Company in Znojmo, which was part of the Infantry Regiment 31 „Arco“ in Jihlava. The task of his unit was to ensure security during the construction of border fortifications. On 14th June 1939, Jan Kubiš illegally crossed the border to Poland where he signed a contract to serve in the French Foreign Legion. On 26th September 1939 he was presented at the Czechoslovak Army in Agde in the south of France. With the 1st Infantry Regiment he underwent heavy retreat battles and was evacuated with the remnants of Czechoslovak troops to England. He was awarded the French Croix de Guerre and the Czechoslovak War Cross for personal bravery in 1939. In England, he was promoted to the rank of Staff Sergeant. From 15th August to 13th September 1939, he completed a sabotage course. On 20th September 1941, he attended a paratrooper course at Ringway Airport. On the suggestion of Josef Gabčík, he was included in the ANTHROPOID group in October 1941 instead of wounded Karel Svoboda.



TRAINING FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Designated courses led by experienced British instructors were setup for a thorough preparation of soldiers who signed up and were chosen for execution of special tasks. Josef Gabčík was chosen as one of eight attendants in the very first course in July 1941. In mid-August 1941, Jan Kubiš joined the second course. The course included engineering, shooting, communication, topography, and physical training. They also learned how to use explosives, hand grenades, and trained hip fire using infantry weapons. The physical training was designed to suppress fear of heights and increase endurance. The hard training in all weathers involved long-distance marches associated with sabotage tasks. The fighting training was immediately followed by a parachute course at Manchester's Ringway Airport. The basis of the course was a thorough theoretical preparation and five parachute jumps from a tied balloon and an aircraft, including a jump at night and with the material. In October, the urgency of the operation was gradually losing priority, and priority was given to the SILVER program, the main task of which was to recover the lost radio link with the domestic resistance. Kubiš and Gabčík in the meantime underwent additional ground and rifle training under the supervision of British instructors. Due to the lack of suitable aircraft, there were several delays in the operation. The departure of the ANTHROPOID group took place during the night between December 28th and 29th 1941. Due to availability of spacious long-range aircraft, the SILVER A and SILVER B groups were together.



EQUIPMENT

The deployment of the paratroopers also had a technical aspect in terms of equipment, weapons and other gear. Several items originated at the Special Operation Executive, which equipped the whole operation ANTHROPOID. A special camouflage jumpsuit was worn for protection from cold in the plane and protection of civil clothing to be used upon landing. The first type was equipped with two pockets, the left one designated for pistol, with a detachable case for additional material. Their clothes consisted of a three piece suit, shoes, shirt, tie, and several sets of underwear, a winter coat, a hat/cap. For aerial deployment, regular type X and A parachutes of the British paratroopers were used, with the parachutes of the agents differing mainly in the camouflage of the canopy and the main harness. The parachutes were opened automatically using a static line after the jump from an opening in the aircraft's hull. The jump lasted only a few seconds, and the main concern was to conceal the parachute.

In case of offensive operation such as ANTHROPOID, the equipment was adapted to the way of execution of the attack. Except for the typical Colt 1903 Pocket Hammerless pistols caliber .32 Auto., The group was equipped with a container with other material. It contained Colt Supers .38 pistols, bombs, grenades, plastic explosives, detonators, STEN submachine gun, Spigot tree type mortar with one shot, ammunition, food, and other special equipment. What they use was to be decided on the spot based on the circumstances. Each paratrooper also had tablets to wake him up, put to sleep or kill.



AIRDROP AND FIRST CO-WORKERS

On the night between 28th and 29th December 1941, three operative groups were disembarked over the territory of the Protectorate. These were ANTHROPOID, SILVER A and SILVER B. As a result of a navigation error, the ANTHROPOID group was deployed near Nehvizdy. Both paratroopers, Jan Kubiš and Josef Gabčík, landed on snowy fields between Nehvizdy and Horoušany. Kubiš, without any problems; Gabčík injured his leg during the jump. They hid the operative material in Antonín Sedláček's nearby chalet and in the morning they went to a village north of their landing site. The two paratroopers then left Nehvizdy and set out to their first safe address in Rokycany, a house owned by Václav Stehlík. Stehlík immediately made an appointment with MUDr. Zdenek Čáp from Rokycany who treated Gabčík's injury. Both paratroopers spent the night at Václav Stehlík's, and on the next day, December 30th, they proceeded to the second address, to Václav Král in Pilsen. Václav Král brought the paratroopers to the police inspector in reserve Jan Bejbl, who arranged false workers' ID cards for the paratroopers. Král gave them the address of his friend Václav Růta in Prague. Růta accepted the two agents without any hesitation. Both paratroopers remained at Růta's apartment until 5th January 1942. On that day, at least according to Pannwitz, Jan Zelenka-Hajský, their neighbour, accidentally appeared in the apartment to order a set of postage stamps from Václav Růta. Since that acquaintance, both paratroopers were taken in to the care of Zelenka's Sokol resistance organization.



PLANNING AND OTHER COLLABORATORS

Finding a place to attack and compiling Heydrich's timetable was not easy. Information about the protector's program was handed over by František Šafařík, Zelenka-Hajský's former student, from the administration of the Prague Castle. The apartment of the sisters Marie Kovárníková and Ludmila Soukupová, in the Letenská Street No. 2 in Malá Strana today, served as a cover for the envelope transfer. The young women provided the paratroopers with the necessary concealment. While walking around Prague, young couples were far less suspicious than two young men sightseeing instead of working. The sisters came from Ohrázenice, a village near Dolní Vilémovice, the birthplace of Jan Kubiš, with whom Maria had a confidential relationship. The German investigation report states that she was pregnant with him, but she lost the baby during the investigation. Josef Gabčík's girlfriend was Anna Malinová, with whom he stayed the night after the assassination. His fiancé however was Liboslava Fafková, who also accompanied the paratroopers with her sister Relá. The entire family supported the operation and was executed in the Mauthausen concentration camp for their involvement in the assassination.

One of the options for the assassination was an attack using the Spigot mortar in an open terrain. In 1942, Heydrich lived in a chateau in Panenské Břežany. However as this area was highly protected by the protectorate and Heydrich's own security, the paratroopers chose a different place of attack. The final location was a curve in Prague-Libeň at the crossroads of Kirchmayerova and V Holešovičkách.



ASSASSINATION

May 27, 1942. Since about half past eight, Gabčík and Kubiš had waited at the intersection near Libeňská Vychovatelna for Heydrich's arrival. They rested their bicycles against a power-line column at the Kirchmayer Avenue. Shortly after half past eleven Gabčík took his position at the edge of the sidewalk. He hid an assembled machine gun under his trench coat. Kubiš positioned himself behind the concrete column of the power-line. The Mercedes was approaching the curve and to avoid an accident with a tram, had to swing sharply right. Gabčík threw away his coat while his target was no more than a meter away from him. He pulled the trigger, but the weapon failed. Ceasing the opportunity, Kubiš, with a practiced motion, threw a prepared bomb which exploded beneath the car's right rear wheel and fatally wounded Heydrich.

Because the way to Gabčík's bicycle had been blocked, he fled up the curve. Heydrich was able to fire twice at him. During his escape, he tried to getaway through a butcher's shop, which did not have a rear entrance, as he supposed. Here he clashed with the driver Klein who was chasing him. Gabčík managed to hit Klein's leg with two bullets and continued his escape. Jan Kubiš left the assassination site on a prepared bicycle. He fired a pistol to distract some witnesses and fled to Libeň. He left the bicycle at the Slavatova Street near the Baťa store and walked to Novák's apartment. Clearing evidence, fourteen-year-old Jindřiska Nováková picked up the bike within few minutes. Injured Heydrich was taken to the hospital Na Bulovce. He died on June 4, 1942.



BETRAYAL AND A FIGHT OVER A CHURCH IN RESSLOVA STREET

After the assassination, the attackers disappeared. Despite strict police measures, the civilian state of emergency, the closure of Prague, constant raids and executions, they did not find any relevant trace. The Gestapo officers also focused on the bicycle of Kubiš. They detained 260 girls from around the area and confronted them with witnesses who voluntarily had come to testify about the wounded cyclist and the girl who carried the bicycle. Although Jindřiška Nováková was among the detainees, none of the women could identify her. Germans intensified the terror and on June 10, 1942 they destroyed Lidice for alleged aid to paratroopers. Men shot, women dragged to concentration camps, murdered or kidnapped children. All the clues to justify the mass murder were false. But the bloody rampage had its effect. Karel Čurda of the OUT DISTANCE operation betrayed the paratroopers and testified to the Gestapo. Arrests of co-workers started and torture has led to the disclosure of a shelter in the Church of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Resslova Street, where 7 paratroopers were hidden in Prague. Early in the morning on June 18th, an operation began in the church surroundings. Upon entering the church, the attackers were met with fire by the defenders from the balcony. After nearly two hours of struggle, Josef Bublík and Adolf Opalka committed suicide, and Jan Kubiš was heavily injured by shells of grenades. Bublík and Kubiš, who still showed signs of life, were immediately taken to the nearby hospital where they both later died.



FIGHTING ON RESSLOVA STREET AND OTHER TERROR

After examining the Church, Germans found more paratroopers hiding in an underground crypt. The besiegers first threw grenades through a small window from the street where a strong reflector was also provided. The defenders thrown back an incendiary bottles to destroy the reflector. When called to surrender, a shot and a phrase echoed from the crypt: „We are Czechs! We will never give up, do you hear? Never!“ Another attempt to get paratroopers to surrender was to flood the crypt with water. Czech firefighters played a tragic role here. After some time, they managed to break another opening into the crypt. However, the attacks were repelled. Due to the desperate situation and lack of ammunition, the remaining four paratroopers, Josef Gabčík, Josef Valčík, Jaroslav Švarc and Jan Hrubý, committed suicide. Their dead bodies were identified by Karel Čurda on the sidewalk.

As a result of the betrayal, the intelligence network, developed by the SILVER A group, was uncovered. The village of Ležáky near Vrbatov Kostelec was burnt down for help in hiding the Libuše radio. Both men and women were executed in Pardubice, children were taken to Chelmno concentration camp where they were executed. Only two girls selected for re-education survived the war. Other associates were transferred to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where 262 women, men and children were executed on the 24th October 1942 in two-minute intervals. Another group of 31 resistance fighters was executed here on 26th January 1943, and lastly František Pecháček on 3rd February 1944.



THE IMPACT OF THE EVENT ON THE RESTORATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The worldwide response to the terror unleashed by the Nazi power over the home population of the Protectorate was magnificent. Villages in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, USA and Australia were renamed to Lidice. Newly born children were given the name Lidice. In Britain, miners founded a movement called Lidice to live. On the east and west fronts, tanks were named after this village. The unprecedented resistance that removed one of the Nazi and SS leaders, as well as a number of victims of the Nazi raid, led to the government's declaration of cancellation of the Munich Agreement for Great Britain on 2nd August 1942 in the London Parliament. For London, it has now become morally unreachable to insist on the validity of the agreement. It was thus completely annulled by the United Kingdom and Czechoslovakia was recognized with its original borders. British declaration on 29th September 1942 was also joined by de Gaulle's „Fighting France”. Operation ANTHROPOID was the most successful act of our home and foreign resistance. The elimination of high ranking Nazi member a senior SS officer in 1942, when the Nazi occupied almost entire Europe, meant a heavy blow to the German Third Reich, and it was hard to find a similarly significant act elsewhere in the German-occupied territory. The operation cost many victims, not only in ranks of trained soldiers – paratroopers, but also among supporters of the home resistance, and innocent people who fell target to the brutal Nazi revenge. Honor their memory.

USED PHOTOS: VHÚ Praha, VÚA-VHA Praha, NA Praha, SOKa Pardubice, ABS Praha, Rota Nazdar, ČSOL, Městské muzeum Valašské Klobouky, Jaroslav Čvančara, Adolf Vondrka, Martin Řiha.