



INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Course: HISTORY AND TRADITION OF THE ARMY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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## FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK RESISTANCE 1914 TO 1918

Independent Czechoslovak State, the beginning of Czech national sovereignty, was established at the end of First World War on 28 October 1918. The declaration of independent state is result of long-lasting effort of representatives of Czechs and partly of Slovaks to fight for independence.

Members of Czech and Slovak nations lived in Austria-Hungarian Monarchy for century. While Czechs gained full possibility of national development within so called Austrian Empire (or Cisleithania), Slovaks lived in non-democratic conditions of Hungarian Kingdom (or Transleithania).

That is why in the beginning of First World War the requests for independent Czech or Czechoslovak State remain very rare. The only who demanded national sovereignty were few members of Czech nationalists, among them **Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Edvard Beneš, Milan Rastislav Štefánik, or Karel Kramář**.

While Karel Kramář counted on victory of Russia and the fact that Russian army would enter the Czech Lands, T. G. Masaryk realized that it would be better for Czechs and Slovaks if western powers, i.e. France and United Kingdom, prevails.

Different situation was among so called **Czech and Slovak compatriots** who lived in **United States** and **Russia**. In total more than one million Czechs and Slovaks left for emigration to find better conditions for living. They settled in Northern part of United States (Illinois, Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania) or Western part of Russia, i.e. Volhynia in present day north-western Ukraine. They had their authorities and they demanded independence for Czechs and Slovaks in Austria-Hungary.

Effort of compatriots forms the first stage of First Czechoslovak Resistance Movement. Thanks to these organizations first Czechoslovak military units were formed in France and in Russia in 1914. But later on effort of T. G. Masaryk prevailed. He was able to gain support of France, United Kingdom, United States, and finally of Russia. Due to his activities three main **legionary armies** were formed in **Russia, France, and in Italy** in 1917 and 1918. Together in these Legions served some 150 000 men. It was not bad result for stat that did not existed...

Also in text the term **Czechoslovak Legions** or **Czechoslovak Legionaries** is used, in fact this term was not use during First World War. The term "Legions" was formed in independent Czechoslovakia to name the members of First Czechoslovak Resistance Movement during 1920s and later on became common word for Czechoslovak military units in 1914 to 1920.

## Czech Compatriots in Russia

In Russian Empire lived numerous group of Czech compatriot, together about 40 to 60 thousand Czechs. They lived in large cities like Warsaw (present day Poland), Kiev (Ukraine), Saint Petersburg and Moscow, but majority of them lived in Volhynia in present day Ukraine. The members of Czech Volhynian group were peasants who left Czech Lands to gain their own farms. Other communities were formed in Caucasus.

During years authorities of compatriots were formed in Russia. The representatives of compatriots met Tsar Nicolas II on 4 August 1914 and **demanded formation of Czech military unit** within Russian army.

Their effort was key element for formation of unit out of members of Czech compatriots who had their Austria-Hungarian citizenship. As members of enemy states (see Manifesto about war with Germany from 2 August 1914) they were supposed to be deported into concentration camps.

The Czech compatriots demanded creation of independent Czechoslovak state. Russian government refused this request, but made use of Czech eagerness to wage the fights with German and Austria-Hungarian forces.

Later on congress of **Czechoslovak Societies in Russia** took place in Moscow in March 1915 and chairman of society was elected. Bohuslav Čermák became head of Russian compatriots in Russia. But Russia did not become the decisive member of Entente. Due to internal crisis after 1916 were not able to fulfil its duty as Entente member.

## Czech Company 1914

In its beginnings, however, **Russia was the first country to form Czech-manned military unit.**

Formation of so called **Czech Company** (in Czech "Česká družina") of volunteers was approved on 12 August 1914 and order was issued on 18 August 1914. While members of Czech Company were Czechs with Russian citizenship or with application for Russian citizenship (majority of them; condition due to Haag Convention), the corps of officers were only Russians.

According to **Haag Convention** there was not possible to form army of Prisoners of Wars. That is why original members were citizens of Austria-Hungary.

During September 1914 formation of Czech Company took place and was finished in moment of consecration of standard in Kiev on 28 September 1914. The unit had together 800 men. Later on members of company took an oath and were moved in front on 11 October 1914.

Russians made use the fact that Czechs had perfect knowledge of German (some of them even Magyar) language and conditions in Austro-Hungarian army and deployed them not as whole unit, but company was divided into platoons and even smaller units and these had been assign to divisions in whole Eastern front as needed.

Due to fact that since its beginning the Czech company had success, soon was extended during 1915 and new commander became Colonel Vyacheslav P. Troyanov.

## **Czech and Slovak Compatriots in Western**

The highest number of Czech and Slovak compatriots lived in United States, ca 1.2 million. Situation in France and United Kingdom was very different. In France there were only 2000 compatriots, especially in Paris, and in United Kingdom only 1000 of them.

The effort of Compatriots was the same as in Russia, i.e. to join armies of Western countries in order to involve in military resistance against Austria-Hungary and to gain independence for Czechoslovakia.

Decisive part among compatriots in France and United Kingdom formed members of Sokol movement, i.e. nationalist movement. This movement focused also on physical education, it meant that they were very well prepared for military service.

## **Company Nazdar! 1914**

But the only possibility for all of them was to enter **French Foreign Legion**. The compatriots, willing to fight for Czechoslovak independence were obliged to sign for five years of duty as anybody else.

Nearly 300 Czechs entered French Foreign Legion and within French Foreign Legion so called "**Company Nazdar!**" was formed. The name derives from the typical Czech greetings "Nazdar!" that could be translated as "Hello!" or "Ahoi!". But not all Czechs were deployed in Company Nazdar! Some of them served in other units.

Company Nazdar! became part of **Battalion C** of the **2nd Infantry Regiment** of **Moroccan Division**. Commander of battalion was appointed Captain Sallé. The unit gave an oath with awarding of standard in Bayonne, Southern France on 12 October 1914. After that company was transferred to the front near Reims during November 1914 and awaited the first battle.

## **Battle of Arras 1915**

First months in Western front the company stayed in quiet place of front. But in April 1914 Moroccan Division and was company transferred near Arras to take part of large offensive. The first battle of

Company Nazdar!, so called **Battle of Arras**, took place on 9 May 1915. Despite high losses of company, the Company Nazdar! was ordered to assault for the second time on 16 June 1915. In these two attacks company was inflicted considerable losses; 43 men had fallen and some 100 were wounded.

It meant that company lost its ability to fight, was disbanded and the rest of volunteers were transferred to other units of French Foreign Legion.

The **Battle of Arras** represents the first and for long times also the last battle of Czech unit in Western Front during First World War.

In the beginning of First World War in 1914 **in total 600 men served in French Foreign Legion**. In this formation Czechs suffered high losses. Each third, i.e. in total 200 of them, died to the end of war, each second, i.e. in total 300, became invalids. Only the 50 men that remained in North Africa survived war without injuries.

## **Czech Brigade 1916**

Czech Company was transformed into **Czechoslovak Riflemen Brigade** at the beginning of 1916 and then into **Czechoslovak Brigade** on 19 April 1916. This enlargement was due to fact that Russian government agreed to refill the Czech unit from the P.O.W. in Russia. That time some 100 000 men of Czech and Slovak origin was among the captured soldiers of Austria-Hungary army. Brigade had in total 5750 men by the end of 1916.

In 1916 member of Czech National Committee, **Josef Dürich**, came into Russia to negotiate the conditions of co-operation between Czechoslovak and Russian representatives. But Josef Dürich failed in his mission and supported not the effort of committee, but of Russian government.

Situation had changed dramatically in course of February 1917, when first revolution broke out and Tsarism was thrown out.

Meantime chairman of Czech National Committee, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, came in Russia. His new aim was to form strong Czechoslovak army and to ensure its transfer from revolutionary Russia to France to continue in fight for independent Czechoslovakia.

But formation of Czechoslovak army had to deal with obstacles. The committee had to deal with reluctance of Russian authorities and the fact that not all Czech P.O.W. wanted to enter the Czechoslovak Army. Only some 20 % were willing to join Czechoslovak Resistance Movement.



## Battle of Zborov 1917

Alexander Kerensky, the Minister of War of Russian Provisional Government, decided to commence large offensive with aim to change the course of war in favour of Russia. This offensive came into history as Brusilov, or **Kerensky Offensive**. This offensive differed from other offensive in fact that only volunteers were allowed to join the offensive.

This fact made use members of Czech Brigade, who reported for duty voluntarily. Due to this brigade was deployed for the first time as compact unit (!).

The Czech Brigade comprised of three regiments:

Commander Vyacheslev P. Troyanov,

**1th Rifle Regiment of Mister John Hus,**

**2th Rifle Regiment of George of Podiebrad, and**

**3th Rifle Regiment of John Zizka of Trocnov.**

The brigade consisted of about 3500 men. Despite the fact that brigade was low on equipment.

According to prepared plan Czechoslovak Brigade was supposed to wage only supportive action. Northern of position of Brigade there was **4th Finnish Division** and southern there was **6th Finnish Division** which both were supposed to wage the decisive assault on first day of Kerensky Offensive, on 1 July 1917.

The Czechoslovak Brigade was deployed during second attack on 2 July 1917. The Czech commanders of battalions prepared new tactic, so called Shock troop tactic. The core of this new tactic was to assault in small groups and to avoid the main places of enemy resistance and to attack into the rear.

Due to this tactic Czechoslovak Brigade reached huge success. By afternoon Legion advanced 15 km into enemy territory and broke all Austrian trench lines.

Despite the fact that brigade had 3500 men, Czechoslovaks captured some 3300 Austrian soldiers and 20 guns as well as number of other weaponry captured. On the other hand during the battle 167 men fallen, 17 died for injury, and some 800 to 1100 were wounded.

Battle of Zborov was the enormous victory. But in total the Kerensky Offensive was nothing but success. That meant that battle of Zborov was the only success of Offensive.

Paradoxical, the Czechoslovak Brigade fought with Austrian regiments of Czech origin; there were **35th** and **75th Infantry Regiments** from Bohemia, all under Commander of General **Eduard von Böhm-Ermolli** with origins of Czech lands.

But due to failure of Kerensky Offensive Czechoslovak Brigade had to retreat more than 100 km. Due to his withdrawal Czechoslovak Brigade had larger losses than during battles; in total in so called Ternopol Retreat the brigade lost some 320 men.

## Reception of Battle of Zborov

The **Battle of Zborov** was the **first significant victory** of Czechoslovak Legion. In comparison of Russian failure in meant the end of mistrust from the side of Russian authorities.

Kerensky himself approved large recruitment into Czechoslovak Legions. In short time some 30 000 men were registered and nearly 50 000 men army of non-existing state was formed by the end of 1917.

**4th Rifle Regiment of Prokop the Great** was created in September 1917. That is why the brigade was changed into **1st Czechoslovak Division** and later on the formation of 2nd Czechoslovak Division was commenced.

This second division consisted of four regiments:

**5th Prague Rifle Regiment of T. G. Masaryk,**

**6th Rifle Regiment of Hana Region,**

**7th Rifle Regiment of Tatra Mountains, and**

**8th Rifle Regiment of Silesia.**

The enlargement of Czechoslovak units was reason why the both divisions were transformed into Czechoslovak Army Corps. The order of creation of **Czechoslovak Army Corps** in Russia was issued on 9 October 1917.

## Czech National Council 1916 to 1918

The Czechoslovak Resistance Movement that remained in Czech lands **suffered considerable losses** in 1915. Its informal leader, **Karel Kramář**, together with **Alois Rašín** and others were put in prison; the whole organization, Maffia, was paralyzed.

In this situation increased importance of foreign part of Czechoslovak resistance. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Edvard Beneš together with Milan Rastislav Štefánik formed representative

body of Czech and Slovak nation Czech National Council, or **Czechoslovak National Council** in the beginning of 1916.

The council focused its effort to gain support from the side of organizations of compatriots, especially of those who lived in United States, and tried to persuade Western authorities to form independent Czech Army.

During summer 1917 opinion of French authorities had changed due to results of Czechoslovaks in Battle of Zborov. On 20 June 1917 negotiations between Czech National Council and Ministry of War of France took place and resulted in decision that Czech Army was formed as autonomous part of French army under supreme political governance of Czech National Council.

## **Czechoslovak Army in Russia**

The French government calculated with possibility to **transfer the Czechoslovak Army from Russia in French battlefield**. But due to October Revolution of 1917 and Civil War that started during spring 1918 attempted transfer to France failed; only ca. 1000 men were through Arkhangelsk send to France.

October Revolution also meant demoralization of Russian Army and later on the situation, when Russia left Entente and pledge for armistice and for peace. In this conditions there was not possible to fulfil task of Czechoslovak Legions, i.e. to fight for independence against Austria-Hungary and Germany.

Moreover, during May 1918 **Czechoslovak Communist Party** was established in Moscow and Czechoslovak Communists begin to persuade Czechoslovak Legionaries not to fight for interests of "Capitalists" (for independence), but for "Communism" (for Revolution and for peace). That is why nearly 10 000 Czechs and Slovaks (!) entered Red Army.

Because of Revolution in Russia Czechoslovak Armed Corps declared itself to be **part of Entente** on 7 February 1918. The goal of the day was to get transfer through Siberia to Vladivostok in order to reach France.

Since this moment Czechoslovak Legionaries were no longer obliged to listen to orders of Russian Army that in fact ceased to exist and was replaced by Red Army, i.e. army of Communists.

At the same time peace talks in Brest-Litovsk between Central Powers and Russia failed and German army began to advanced eastwards. The Czechoslovak Corps was compelled to rapidly go eastwards to reach its goal and avoid of captivity.

This German advancement became one of the most serious problems. Czechoslovak did not want to fight against Germans in Eastern Front, but situation forced them to wage the **Battle of Bakhmach**.

## **Battle of Bakhmach 1918**

According to results of Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty the Soviet Russian gave up control over Ukraine. Newly established Ukrainian government allowed the Germans to occupy Ukrainian territory.

Meantime Czechoslovak Army, comprising of 42 000 men, was on its way to Russia to reach **Trans-Siberian Railroad**. The condition to reach Trans-Siberian Railroad was to pass through railroad junction in city Bakhmach in Ukraine. At the same time German forces reached Bakhmach and thread the Legionaries to cut their way. That is why the **Battle of Bakhmach** took place.

The delaying fights lasted from 8 to 13 March 1918. The first Czechoslovak units to defence town were 6th and 7th Rifle Regiments against incoming 91st and 224th Infantry Division. During the battle Legionaries were able to defence against numeric superiority and counted the total losses of some 150 killed and 200 wounded. It is said that the last Czechoslovak train passed through Bakhmach railway station precisely in the moment when first German troops entered the next end of station.

The significance of Battle of Bakhmach lies in fact that Czechoslovak Legions **successfully escape the encirclement, opened the way to Russia** and to set the preconditions of later tradition of Czechoslovak units in Siberia.

## **Czech Autonomous Army in France**

After the Battle of Bakhmach the core of development of Czechoslovak Legionaries Movement switched into territory Western powers, especially in France. The decree of French president on formation of **Czechoslovak Autonomous Army** was issued on 17 December 1917 and later on the Agreement of Status of Czechoslovak Army in France was signed on 7 February 1918.

According of this status members of Czechoslovak Army were:

P.O.W. from Romania and Serbia of Czech and Slovak nationality,

Legionaries in France that arrived from Russia, and then also

P.O.W. of France captured from Austria-Hungarian army.

But status still did not solve the legal situation. The members of army were neither soldiers nor P.O.W.'s and did not have French citizenship.

After that formation of **21st Czechoslovak Regiment** in Cognac in Southern France took place on 12 February 1918 and later on also of **22nd Czechoslovak Regiment** on 20 May 1918. While majority of officer corps were formed of French officers, to number of Czech officers were not confirmed their rank. This situation became reason of number of tensions between Czech National Council and both regiments.

After its formation both regiments took an oath and received standard from French President Raimond Poincaré in town Darney on 30 June 1918. In present days this moment is commemorated as the Day of Czech Armed Forces.

Besides 21st and 22nd regiments the 23rd and 24th regiments were formed. In total all four regiments had ca. 10 000 men.

## **Battle of Terron 1918**

In the beginning of July 1918 the 21th regiment was transferred in front near German borders, but soon after that was withdrawal back. It was due to fact that **Czechoslovak Brigade** was formed from 21th and 22nd regiments on 16 October 1918.

Czechoslovak Brigade was deployed in middle part of Western Front. There undertook fight near town Vouziers; so called **Battle of Terron** took place from 18 to 22 October 1918 and for Czechoslovak meant high losses on men and weaponry.

On 8 November 1918 members of brigade were announced the declaration of independent state Czechoslovakia and returned from front to the rear. In the beginning of 1919 all Czechoslovak units were transferred from France to Czechoslovakia and took part in struggle for Czechoslovak borders in Silesia, in so called **Seven Days War** in January 1919.

At this moment ended war for Czechoslovak Legionaries in Western Front in France, where approximately 650 Czechs and Slovaks died in 1914 to 1918.

**Despite the fact that Czechoslovak units in Western Front did not conduct any decisive battle, they high moral and willing to sacrifice even their lives to reach national sovereignty were one of the most important moments in way to Czechoslovak statehood during First World War and persuaded the powers to support Czechoslovak demands.**

## **Formation of Czechoslovak Legions in Italy**

The most complicated situation in Italy. Italian authorities supported neither formation of independent army nor Czechoslovak independence. The reason was the fact that Italy has its own

interests to gain Austria-Hungarian territory in areas that demanded important ally of Czechoslovaks – Southern Slavs.

The next reason was the fact that there were not any Czech-Italian friendly relations. For centuries Italians were the enemies and one of the most distinguished Czech military leaders, Marshall Radecky, fought against Italians.

In Italy there also was question, i.e. who should form the Czechoslovak Army? There were not any Czech compatriots in Apennine Peninsula, in total only 300 men. And also there was problem to get captured in Italian theatre, where was difficult mountain terrain.

The first **Czechoslovak Volunteer Corps** was formed within P.O.W.s in Padua, Italy in the beginning of 1917. The volunteers wanted to serve in pioneer units, i.e. for logistics only. The next step represented few companies in Italian army that conducted reconnaissance and agitation among Austro-Hungarian soldiers from beginning of 1918.

**The Agreement on formation of Czechoslovak Army** in Italy was signed on basis of negotiations of M. R. Štefánik and Italian authorities on 21 April 1918. That meant that recruitment of Czech P.O.W.s was commenced.

According to Czech National Council there had been ca. 17 000 P.O.W.s in Italy, from which ca. 14 000 men enlisted the Legions.

## **Battle of Doss Alto 1918**

According to Czechoslovak-Italian Agreement four Czechoslovak military formations were founded during summer 1918; the 31st Czechoslovak Regiment was formed in Perugia, 32nd regiment in Assisi, 33rd in Foligno, and 34th in Spoleto, later on 39th regiment in September 1939 and also 35th regiment during October 1918.

In middle of August 1918 the division was transferred to Italian front to defend section near Lake Garda. The task of the Czechoslovak regiments was to defend part of front around Doss Alto Hill, peak with 703 meters above sea.

The **Battle of Doss Alto** was not the largest one. The battle, or more precisely the fight, took place on 28 August 1918. Thanks to engagement of 33rd and 34th regiment the attack of Austro-Hungarian forces was deflected. Legionaries counted in total 7 fallen and 119 wounded men and 5 Legionaries were captured and as traitor executed.

By the end of September 1918 33rd and 34th regiments replaced by 31st and 32nd regiments and in early October 1918 the Czechoslovak units were withdrawal from front and prepared to be deployed in Piava Offensive.

At the same time Czechoslovak Army Corps is formed. The regiments nos. 31st, 32nd, and 35th formed **6th Czechoslovak Division** in Italy, while regiments nos. 33rd, 34th, and 39th formed **7th Czechoslovak Division**. In these two divisions served in total about 20 000 men. The commander was **General Andrea Graziani**, then **General Piccione**, who became decisive men during fight of Legionaries in Slovakia.

But Czechoslovak Army Corps did not take part in planned Piava Offensive. The war in Italian front ended and in early December 1918 all Czechoslovak units returned to Czechoslovakia.

## **Siberian Anabasis 1918 to 1920**

In the Western and Italian Front the war for Czechoslovak Legionaries ended by the end of 1918, but in Russia the fights continued due to outbreak of **Russian Civil War**. On one side there were members of Communist Movement (so called **Bolshevik**), on the other side number of **anti-Bolshevik** groups, Tsarists, February Revolutionists, and Czechoslovak Legionaries etc.

In spring 1918 the Czechoslovak Army Corps was transferring to the East to reach harbour Vladivostok and to be shipped to Western Front in France. But Bolshevik Regime tried to delay Czechoslovak advancement to East and attempted to ideologically diverse Legions. Except this, Czechoslovak Army Corps was forced to hand over number of weapons, guns, and machine guns etc., even airplanes (!).

While Czechoslovak Legionaries were moving eastward, the German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war were heading westwards in order to achieve Germany and Austria-Hungary. But railroad net was undeveloped that meant, that both groups were travelling on one trace and encountered each other.

It was only matter of time, when some incident between those two groups took place. So called **Chelyabinsk Incident** happened on 14 May 1918. What was the reason and what was the result of this incident?

Under pretext that one Czechoslovak Legionary was injured by Hungarian P.O.W., the members of Czechoslovak Army breached the authority of Bolshevik rule, i.e. they stopped the train with Hungarian P.O.W. That led into more serious conflict, into conflict between **Bolshevik Regime and Czechoslovak Legionaries**. This is also called the Revolt of Czechoslovak Legion.

Czechoslovak Army was declared to be illegal in Russia and Bolshevik authority called upon all their followers to defeat them.

Despite the fact Legionaries were able to conduct **mobilization of majority of Czech prisoners of war** in Russia during August 1918 and new Czechoslovak units were formed. These units were:

**9th Rifle Regiment of K. H. Borovsky,**

**10th Rifle Regiment of Jan Kozina, and**

**12th Rifle Regiment of M. R. Štefánik.**

It meant that formation of **3rd Czechoslovak Division** had started.

The aim of Czechoslovak Legionaries was to take control over Trans-Siberian Railway. Legionaries were able to prevail in railroad and reached great success that became reason of propagation of demands of independent Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovak Legionaries took control over Trans-Siberian Railway from Volga Region in the West to Volgograd in the East. They fought in three major fronts; in Western front in European Russia, in Ural front, and in Siberian front. During their struggle they prevailed in battle of Lipyag, of Pemza etc. There were also able to occupy number of cities along the road, Chelyabinsk, Petropavlovsk, Kugansk, Novonikolaevsk etc. The result was that Bolshevik rule in Siberia was wiped out.

But despite huge military success Czechoslovak Army in Russia became exhausted due to numerical superiority of Bolsheviks in autumn 1918. Legionaries were forced to retreat from number of cities and in early 1919 they withdrawal from front began.

The next reason was fact that since early November 1918 Legionaries heard about independent Czechoslovakia and did not see reason to continue in Russian Civil War.

**Evacuation of Legionaries** from Vladivostok, Siberia started in August 1919. The last transport left Russia on 2 September 1920. They headed for Czechoslovakia. In total 67 750 persons including 56 459 soldiers were evacuated from Siberian Anabasis.



## **Summary of Chapter**

During First World War the Czechoslovak Legions of First Czechoslovak Resistance Movement were formed in Russia, France, and in Italy in 1914 to 1919. Their significance lies not only in fact of military importance, but especially in fact that due to their effort independent Czechoslovak State was established. Despite primary reluctance of powers to support Czechoslovak independence, situation had changed after the battle of Zborov; that is why the battle represents the most decisive moment in development of First Czechoslovak Resistance Movement.

It also means that Czechoslovak Legions were the preconditions of independence of Czechs and of Slovaks, beginning of their statehood and forms also important part of their military tradition.

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## SECOND CZECHOSLOVAK RESISTANCE 1938 TO 1945

Occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 became the beginning of Czechoslovak Anti-Nazi resistance. The Czechoslovak patriots then formed resistance movement both in territory of former Czechoslovakia (**home resistance**) and abroad (**foreign resistance**). In course of Second World War the second one prevailed; the provisional Czechoslovak government that gained full recognition after Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich became guarantee of continuation and sovereignty of Czechoslovakia.

In its beginning after March 1939 the situation of Czechoslovakian resistance was complicated due to fact that Poland, France, and United Kingdom, countries that became shelter of Czechoslovak patriots, were not in war with Nazi Germany and therefore could not support Czechoslovak resistance without diplomatic impact on relations with Germany. It explains why it took so long time to establish representative body of Czechoslovak resistance (at first National Committee, than Czechoslovak government) in November 1939 and July 1940, respectively.

The first military unit of Czechoslovak resistance was formed in Poland in 1939; Czechoslovak pilots also served in Polish Air Force. After defeat of Poland at the end of September the core of foreign Czechoslovak movement had moved in France. Czechoslovaks were allowed to enter French Foreign Legion (the same as in the First World War) and when France declared war to Germany the Czechoslovak division was formed. During Battle of France Czechoslovak pilots showed themselves as heroic and effective fighter.

But when France was defeated the foreign resistance had to move once again; this time into United Kingdom, where Czechoslovak Brigade with ca. 4000 men and four Royal Air Force squadrons were formed. Czechoslovak pilots took part in course of Battle of England in 1940 and then in Operation Overlord in 1944, while land forces were deployed in seize of Dunkirk in 1944 and 1945.

The formation of foreign resistance in Soviet Union was even more complicated due to fact that Soviet Union was ally of Germany till 22 June 1941. After the war between these countries broke out the formation of military units took place. At first Czechoslovak Battalion with ca. 1000 men was founded, then Czechoslovak Brigade of 3500 men and finally Czechoslovak Corps with approximately 16 000 men. The Czechoslovak Corps than took part in liberalization of Czechoslovak territory.

Home resistance after March 1939 had to deal with repression of Nazi Regime. The Gestapo (Geheime Staatspolizei, Secret State Police) revealed organizations of patriots and finally nearly destroyed all resistance movement during so called Heydrich Era ("Heydrichiáda" in Czech), period of highest level of repression in order to revenge the death of Nazi prominent in summer 1942. In fact home resistance had to be formed for second time at the end of 1944.

## Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

In 14 to 16 March 1939 Czechoslovak state ceased to exist. At first Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia declared independence on 14 March 1939, then Czechoslovak territory was occupied by German forces on 15 March 1939 and finally Adolf Hitler in his decree established Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia on 16 March 1939.

At the same time German police forces commenced **Action Gitter** (Grating), i.e. preventive arrest of opponents of Nazi regime.

In Protectorate **Autonomous Government** was established, its head was State President Emil Hácha. But in Protectorate was also so called **Protectorate of Reich**, representative of Germany, appointed; the first Protectorate of Reich was Konstantin von Neurath.

Czechoslovak army was gradually dissolved until summer 1939, but officers transferred to administration. Germans tried to control the military man and giving them a perspective posts to “bribe” them not to involve into resistance. That is why officers were allowed to wear uniforms and even guns (!). In Protectorate also autonomous army, **Government Army** was established. In total this army comprised of 12 battalions and 6500 men. Its aim was to maintain civil order in Protectorate and to assist for example during natural disasters etc.

Despite those mentioned tendency to “bribes” Czechoslovak military men organized resistance authority **Obrana národa** (Defence of Nation) that consist of officers and of soldiers. The goal of this organization was preparation of whole-nation uprising and later to maintain connection with headquarters of resistance in London. Other military men left for exile, among them some 500 to 700 officers, especially pilots, because of appeal of President Edvard Beneš.

There were few ways to leave Czechoslovakia, so called North Way led through Poland and majority members of resistance left from this territory near Ostrava with help of railway employees due to fact that it was only border with independent state (i.e. with Poland). Next way led through Slovakia and Hungary to Romania or Yugoslavia and then to Middle East, while western way led directly through Germany and Austria, but was only for those, who had official permission (business trip etc.). Finally Communists left for U.S.S.R. (via Poland) but majority of them were imprisoned in U.S.S.R. (!).

## Formation of Second Resistance

World powers condemned occupation of rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, but did not do any arrangement. In U.S.A. Czech and Slovak compatriots supported Edvard Beneš and its effort to restore sovereign Czechoslovak state. New resistance centre was meantime formed in London,

England. During summer Edvard Beneš left for United Kingdom, where he hoped to find support of his effort. Luckily, group of intelligence officers escaped from Czechoslovakia just one day before occupation, on 14 March 1939. The head of Czechoslovak Intelligence was famous Colonel František Moravec, one of the most distinguished representatives of second resistance.

The most important was fact that European powers were not in war with Germany until 3 September 1939. It meant that neither France nor United Kingdom could support Edvard Beneš' action. But he relied on fact that the war between Germany and Western powers had to break out. And he was right.

But first of all Edvard Beneš needed to empowered his position. He was not the only representative of Czechoslovak state and he was not the only one who attempted to be supposed as the head of Czechoslovak resistance movement. Besides him there was French group of Czechoslovak Ambassador Štefan Osuský and in Poland military action with General Lev Prchala. Except them there also was leadership of Czechoslovak Communist Party in Soviet Union. Communists were out of resistance movement. For that moment.

The aim of all these representatives was to restore Czechoslovak state and the way to reach this goal was to build Czechoslovak Army. But before the Czechoslovak army was built in France, first attempt took place in Poland.

## **Polish Legion 1939**

The foundations of Czechoslovak resistance were set in Poland in spring and summer 1939. Due to occupation of rest of Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939 thousands of Czechs and Slovaks left their home to join Czechoslovak resistance movement. First country on their way was Poland. There exist two main reasons, why vast number of refugees arrived in Poland:

**Poland** was the only country in Middle Europe that **was not allied to Germany** and

Protectorate Czech and Bohemia and Poland had **common borderline** in Teschen Region.

Czech refugees concentrated themselves in Cracowia (Kraków), where, despite the occupation, **Czechoslovak Consulate** continued in its existence and where existed so called **Trust Fund**, British organization established with aim to support Czechoslovakian emigrants.

From its beginnings Czechoslovak resistance movement in Poland suffered by inner disputes. These disputes concerned issue of leading of resistance movement. There were important arguments between former President Edvard Beneš and General Lev Prchala. There were also disputes about

political orientation of Czechoslovak movements; in Cracowia there were both Czechoslovak democrats and Czechoslovak Communists.

Despite above mentioned complications meeting took place and so called **Military Group** was established on 30 April 1939. First commander of Military Group was Cpt. Karel Veselý, but very soon he was replaced by Lt. Col. Ludvík Svoboda.

The aim of this group was to create Czechoslovak army like in the First World War, primarily in France. That is why representatives of resistance negotiate with France and they were gained an opportunity to enter French Foreign Legion. Volunteers had to sign for five years duty, but in case of outbreak the German-French war they were guaranteed to join independent Czechoslovak Army (that still did not exist yet). It was risky for these men. But together 1212 men including nearly 500 pilots entered Foreign Legion.

Decisive role in early stage of Czechoslovak resistance movement played General Lev Prchala. In June 1939 he arranged talks with supreme representatives of Polish army. Thanks to him Military Group got camp in town Bronowice Małe near Cracowia. On 30 August 1939 Military Group was subordinated to Polish IX. Corps and relocated in camp in Baranowicze near Leszno in northwest Poland. After outbreak of Second World War the **Czech and Slovak Legion** was established by decree of President Ignacy Mościcki on 3 September 1939.

Because of German rapid advancement in Polish campaign Czech and Slovak Legion was compelled to leave camp near Leszno on 11 September 1939. But on its way to south Legion was stuck in Hluboczek Wielki near Tarnopol. One unit under command of Lt. Styk were deployed by air defence of Tarnopol.

Situation of Czech and Slovak Legion deteriorated badly on 17 September 1939 when Soviet troops attacked Poland from East. Lt. Col. Svoboda decided to be captured by Red Army better than to go to Romanian territory. That is why legion and its ca. 700 men were captured on 18 September 1939 and interned in Soviet Union.

Not all members of Legion got captured. Group of Cpt. Divoky, ca. 200 men, got to Romania. Other group find refuge among Czech compatriots that lived in Volhynian Region.

Except members of legions the number of Czechs and Slovaks entered into Polish army. They served in Polish Air Force, especially in survey units.

## **Czechoslovak National Committee 1939 and 1940**

The beginning of Polish Campaign and the war dramatically changed the situation. Since 3 September 1939 both France and United Kingdom were in war with Germany. Situation began more favourable for Czechoslovak resistance movement and especially of Edvard Beneš. Meantime, due to defeat of Poland, General Lev Prchala lost his support from Polish government.

These two preconditions enable to formation of **Czechoslovak National Committee** on 17 November 1939. National committee was recognized as supreme representative body of Czechs and Slovaks abroad, especially in France. But committee was not supposed to represents Czechoslovak state (!). The chairman of Committee was

**Edvard Beneš**, President of Committee, among members there were:

**Jan Šrámek**, Vice-President of Committee,

**General Sergej Ingr**,

**Štefan Osuský**,

**Eduard Outrata**,

**General Rudolf Viest, and others.**

It meant that committee was compromise between resistance movement groups.

The aim of committee was to gain recognition from Western powers, but also to set preconditions to form its own Czechoslovak Army. That is why that according to the position of committee to be supreme representative body of all Czechs and Slovaks in France mobilization of all Czechs and Slovaks in France took place.

In fact military co-operations took place before political recognition:

Unofficial **Czechoslovak Military Office** in France existed since 2 August 1939,

**Czechoslovak Military Mission** in France was established on 12 September 1939 and provisional **agreement on restoration of Czechoslovak army** in France was signed on 2 October 1939.

It meant that effort of representatives of Czechoslovakia to build Czechoslovak army abroad was successful. According to previous agreement all members of French Foreign Legion of Czech and Slovak nationality were released to form units of volunteers, in total some 1800 men, including pilots. Besides due to mobilization thousands of men entered forming **Czechoslovak Division**.

## Czechoslovak Division in France 1940

On the ground of Czechoslovak-French agreements the formation of Czechoslovak military unit in Aude in Southern France began in September 1939.

At the end of 1939 the Czechoslovak regiment had together 3500 men and

First Czechoslovak Division was established on 15 January 1940.

General Rudolf Viest was appointed to be commander of the division.

At the end of January 1940 formation of division was finished. Unit comprised of three regiments and had together 11 405 men, i.e. 3326 volunteers and 8169 mobilized compatriots, but majority of them were Slovaks. It meant that division had problems with moral due to fact that Slovaks were very often loyal to Slovak Republic, not Czechoslovakia.

German army commenced Western campaign on 10 April 1940 and then Battle of France on 5 June 1940. Because of rapid advancement of German units two Czechoslovak regiments were ordered to take part in retreat fights until 18 June 1940. Two regiments of division, now under Commander General Bedřich Miroslav (known under cover name Neumann), undertook **Battles of Gian and of Coulommiers**. The losses were not due to rapid withdrawal and increasing chaos never counted, in total two Czechoslovak regiments suffered probably 400 dead and wounded and another hundreds of missing.

Situation of France was catastrophic and French government under Prime Minister and General Philippe Pétain pledged for armistice that was signed on 22 June 1940.

The only solution left was to evacuate the rest of Czechoslovak division into in United Kingdom in order to avoid captivity. But according to order of Commander of division the military service was set on voluntary basis. That is why only ca. 4000 soldiers and 500 civilians were transferred into England. The rest of men left the division and stayed in France.

## Czechoslovak Army in United Kingdom

Czechoslovak soldiers, former members of Czechoslovak Division, were concentrated to camp in **Cholmondeley** near Chester. But also in England **inner disputes** within unit took place. On one side there were those who supported Edvard Beneš and his effort for restoration of Czechoslovak independence, on next side there were those who disagreed and who obeyed the decision of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, i.e. the war is mutually unfair struggle between capitalist blocs.

The situation was solved within couple of weeks. Communists and their supporter were removed from Czechoslovak units into so called Pioneer Corps. The following years these men served



in pioneer units, but when war between Germany and Soviet Union broke out, they decided to enter Czechoslovak Brigade (see below).

The agreement on establishing of Czechoslovak army in United Kingdom was signed on 25 October 1940.

The main success was the recognition of **Czechoslovak Provisional Government** by British government of Winston Churchill on 18 and 21 June 1940. In its beginning the government was recognized as provisional, but in following years Czechoslovak Government gained recognition as full representative of Czechoslovak state.

The **President of Czechoslovakia** was **Edvard Beneš** who got both executive and legislative power (so called Beneš' decree, see below),

the **Prime Minister** was appointed **Mgr. Jan Šrámek**,

the **Minister of Defence** was General **Jan Sergej Ingr**, and

among other ministers there were for example **Jan Masaryk**, the son of T. G. Masaryk and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The next body of Czechoslovak Provisional Government was **State Council**, the advice council of President Edvard Beneš and Czechoslovak government-in-exile.

Czechoslovak Provisional Government focused its effort on two main goals. The first one was to continue in **formation of Czechoslovak army** that ended by establishing of Czechoslovak wings within Royal Air Force and Czechoslovak Brigade. The second one was to prepare pre-conditions for **restoration of Czechoslovak State** and to enforce its post-war conditions that meant to gain its pre-Munich state borders and to solve situation of Sudeten German population. In this first task the government was successful; all World powers recognized its borders from 1937, the second one ended in so called Transfer of Sudeten Germans that took place in 1945 to 1947.

## **Edvard Beneš**

Edvard Beneš was Czechoslovak President in 1935 to 1948, Minister of Foreign Affairs in (1916) 1918 to 1935, and leader of Czechoslovak independence movement in 1939 to 1945.

Edvard Beneš was born in Kožlany, Bohemia, in 1884. He studied Charles University and then Sorbonne and Dijon in France, where he received his doctorate in 1908. Edvard Beneš became one of the most important and skilled politician during First World War, when he organized resistance movement both abroad and home (so called **Maffia**). He went into exile in September 1915 and he

joined T. G. Masaryk and his **Czechoslovak National Council** in Paris. After transformation of council into Provisional Government he became Minister of Interior and Foreign Affairs.

In November 1935 he was elected as successor of President T. G. Masaryk. During Czechoslovak Crisis of 1938 he was still in office, when Munich Agreement was signed on 29 September 1938. Few days later he left for exile on 5 October 1938. During so called Second Czechoslovak Republic (1938 to 1939) he left for private life in Chicago, but after March 1938, when Czechoslovakia was occupied, he began with his effort of restoration of Czechoslovak sovereignty.

In May 1945 he returned to Czechoslovakia as one of the famous persons and stayed in office of President until June 1945, when he resigned as protest against Communist rule. Soon after that he died in September 1948.

## **Czechoslovak Air Force in United Kingdom 1940 to 1945**

Concerning the aim of establishing Czechoslovak Air Force in United Kingdom the first important moment was establishing of **Inspectorate of Czechoslovak Air Force** under General **Karel Janoušek** on 12 July 1940 established. General Janoušek became one of the most distinguished persons in second resistance movement and thanks to his effort soon the Czechoslovak air units were formed.

The first fighter squadron was **No. 310 Squadron RAF** that was established in Duxford, England on 12 July 1940. The leader was Douglas Blackwood and due to fact that all Czechoslovak pilots had experiences of Battle of France, the squadron was able to rapidly became involved in **Battle of Britain** in summer and autumn 1940, during which claimed nearly 40 victories. During battle squadron was equipped with Hawker Hurricane fighters and the codes of squadron were "NN".

Second fighter unit was **No. 312 Squadron RAF** was established on 29 August 1940 in Duxford. Squadron became briefly involved in the Battle of England; the first victory was achieved by one of the most successful Czechoslovak pilots Alois Vašátko on 8 October 1940. Later on the squadron was deployed within **Operation Jubilee**, first attempt to open second front in France, i.e. on raid of Dieppe in August 1942. The squadron used as codes letters "DU".

The third and last fighter unit was **No. 313 Squadron RAF** that was established in Catterick on 10 May 1941. In its beginnings squadron was equipped with Spitfire Supermarine fighters.

All Czechoslovak fighter squadrons were united into Czechoslovak Fight Wing (so called **Exeter Wing**) under Captain Alois Vašátko in 1943. This wing took part in **Normandy Landing** in 1944.

The only bombarding Czechoslovak-manned squadron was **No. 311 Squadron RAF** that was founded in Honington on 30 July 1940. The squadron was equipped with Wellington bombers and

took part in bombing of Germany, France, Belgium, and Netherland. Later on squadron was transferred to Coastal Command to carry out patrol duty against submarines in April 1942 and newly equipped with Consolidated Liberator bombers. The airplanes were coded by letters "KX" and "PP".

During 1943 selected Czechoslovak pilots were transferred into Soviet Union, where they formed Soviet air units.

Czechoslovak pilots served not only in Czechoslovak squadrons of RAF, but also in other RAF squadrons, among others especially in RAF Polish squadrons. In total in RAF fought ca. 1500 pilots of Czechoslovak origin.

After the end of Second World War all four squadrons were dissolved on 15 February 1946.

## **Czechoslovak Brigade 1940 to 1944**

The majority of Czechoslovak soldiers were deployed in land army. The remnant of Czechoslovak Division that was transferred into England was transformed into **1st Czechoslovak Mixed Brigade** under General Alois Liška in July 1940. Later on the brigade was transformed into **1st Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade** (1st CIABG) in September 1943, when the number of men increased due to arrival of members of **11th Infantry Battalion** under Lieutenant Colonel Karel Klapálek that took part in defence during **Tobruk Siege** in 1941.

In spring 1944 the brigade comprised of:

**1st Czechoslovak Tank Battalion,**

**2nd Czechoslovak Tank Battalion,**

**1st Czechoslovak Motorized Infantry Battalion** comprising of two companies, and

other units, among them Artillery regiments of two batteries, Anti-Tank Battalion, Engineer Battalion, and Reconnaissance Squadron.

## **Siege of Dunkirk 1944 and 1945**

During 1940 to 1944 brigade was deployed by defence of southern coast of England and after Operation Overlord was transferred to France as part of 21st Army Group on 30 August 1944. That time brigade had 4259 men. Later on brigade was given the mission of **sieging port Dunkirk**, where German troops refused to capitulate.

During Siege of Dunkirk the brigade was subordinated to the 1st Canadian Army. The reason, why the brigade was deployed to contain German defence of Dunkirk was the fact that there were

concerns about re-filling the losses in case the brigade would be deployed in main course of advancement of 21st Army Group.

The siege of Dunkirk lasted from October 1944 to May 1945 due to fact that German garrison comprised of nearly 12 000 men and due to fact that according to agreement with French government British and Americans could not use heavy weapons including bombing. The task of brigade was to prevent the German units to break through the siege and to join with German troops in Western.

The 1st brigade led the successful major assault on German position on 28 October 1944, on Czechoslovak Independence Day. This assault is supposed to be the **most successful Czechoslovak operation** during Second World War.

At the end of war the one symbolic unit under Major Sitek was detached and advanced with American 3rd Army into Czechoslovakia. This unit reached Czechoslovak city Cheb on 1 May 1945. **The Dunkirk garrison surrender** on 9 May 1945 and the brigade reached Prague on 18 May 1945, where was absorbed in Czechoslovak Army.

During siege of Dunkirk brigade suffered losses of 167 dead.

## **Special Operations 1941 to 1945**

The group of Czechoslovak intelligence officers under Colonel František Moravec established effective intelligence net between London exile and Czechoslovak home resistance. After formation of Czechoslovak Provisional Government in June 1940 the officers became as **2nd Department** part of Czechoslovak Ministry of Defence and together with **Special Operation Executives** (British authority) prepared number of special operations.

Due to fact that there was not any direct connection between England and Protectorate Moravia and Moravia all operations were planned as para-troop operations. It meant that all these operations were very risky and all members of Czechoslovak resistance were aware of small chance of survive.

During 1940 to 1945 some 30 operations were prepared. The well-known became **Operation Anthropoid**, operation with huge impact on conduct of the war.

The members of mission Anthropoid were Warrant Officer **Jozef Gabčík** and Staff Sergeant **Jan Kubiš**; both these young men left for exile and via Poland and France reached England. The aim of operation was **assassination of German General and member of SS Reinhard Heydrich**, head of

Main Security Office of Third Reich and acting Protectorate in Bohemia and Moravia. Reinhard Heydrich was supposed to be one of the most decisive men in leadership of whole Third Reich.

The members of Operation Anthropoid were dropped during night from 27 to 28 December 1941 in small village eastern of Prague. In fact both men were near Capital, but the aim was to drop them near Pilsen, middle-large city in Western Bohemia. That is why both parachutists had to move across Bohemia to find their contacts.

During half year in Protectorate they were ready to conduct the assassination. Finally Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš attacked the car of Heydrich on his daily commute from his home on 27 May 1942. Due to failure of Gabčík's weapon Sten submachine gun, Heydrich had to be hit by grenade of Jan Kubiš. Heydrich was seriously injured, but alive. He was transferred to hospital, where his condition deteriorated badly.

After Heydrich's death on 4 June 1942 German administration conceive retaliatory arrangement in Protectorate, the period of June and July is called **Heydrich Era** (Heydrichiada). During this period hundreds of prisoners were executed, among them General Alois Eliáš. Later on **Lidice Massacre**, killing of all men of village Lidice, and then **Ležáky Massacre**, killing of all inhabitants of village Ležáky, took place. In total some 2500 men were killed during Heydrich Era.

Among the killed were also assassins and the paratroopers who helped them. The members of Czechoslovak parachutists found refuge in crypt of **Church of Saints Cyril and Methodius** (former of Saint Carl Borromeo). In early morning hours of 18 June 1942 the crypt was surrounded by German soldiers and Czech policemen. In few hours of shooting all nine parachutists including Kubiš and Gabčík were killed. Due to fact that all witness died, a lot of question about assassination of Reinhard Heydrich remains up these days.

## **Soviet Intern 1939 to 1942**

In Soviet intern members of Legion, now under new name Eastern Group of Czechoslovak Army, changed number of intern camps. The important event happened during intern in Oranki, when conflict between Czechoslovak and Communist orientated groups burst out with unknown power. Since that, those non-Communist members of Eastern resistance were called Oranki-group. In course of Second World War they get decisive commanding post in army unit, but some of them became object of Soviet repression. But in following years they importance grow, because Communist members of Eastern Group were departed to the Middle East, where new Czechoslovak military unit were established. The reason, why Communist members of Czechoslovak resistance had to leave Soviet Union and non-Communist members were forced to stay, is until present days not clear.

From their beginnings Czechoslovak units were object of Soviet propaganda. Communists established secret unit of Czechoslovak Communist Party and spread ideas of Communism and presented political aims of Soviet Union.

Inner disputes within members of unit Pro-Soviet group (Star-Gazer, because of symbol of star they used) and Anti-Soviet First group wanted to stay in U.S.S.R., second group wanted to leave and to involve in war in the West. During 1940 and 1941 transports of part of members, especially of officers and Star-Gazer to Middle East took place.

President Edvard Beneš, head of Czechoslovak resistance during Second World War, count on conflict between Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany. That is why before the war between those two countries broke out he insisted on Czechoslovak-Soviet cooperation. In May 1941 Czechoslovak Foreign Mission in Moscow was installed. Its commander was appointed General Heliodor Píka.

On 8 July 1941 Soviet Union recognized Provisional Czechoslovak Government to be official representative body of Czechoslovak State and on 8 July 1941 treaty on creation of Czechoslovak army in Soviet Union was signed. This treaty was completed by military agreement on 27 September 1941. These acts were pre-conditions that enabled establishing of Czechoslovak army in Soviet Union.

The milestone in formation of Czechoslovak military unit was the break out of Soviet-Germany war on 22 June 1941.

Formation of Czechoslovak army was slowed down by the fact that Soviet Union was in critical military situation. Moreover, Soviets had interest to use Czechs and Slovaks for special operations. Twelve selected volunteers had to undertake special training and as two para-troops were dispatched in territory of former Czechoslovakia. First part of unit called "S/1" ended in total failure due navigational mistakes. Second part was successfully dropped on 10 September 1941 in Moravia. But among the members of para-troop there was a traitor and whole unit was revealed by police.

Because of these failures other group called "S/2" that was already trained and prepared, was not to be deployed.

## **Czechoslovak Battalion 1942 to 1943**

The meeting of Czechoslovak-Soviet commission on 10 January 1942 decided to establish new Czechoslovak unit. On 7 February 1942 recruitment commission formed and Czechs and Slovaks were mobilized for Czechoslovak units, most of them came from Soviet concentration camps. Residence of

unit was in Busuluk, near Europe-Asian borders. Officially the first Czechoslovak unit, 1st Infantry Battalion, was established on 12 February 1942. During summer 1942 battalion was fully prepared for combat. The commander of the battalion was appointed Lt. Col. Ludvík Svoboda. He tried to persuade Soviet superior commanders to deploy Czechoslovak battalion in front as soon as possible. In autumn 1942 battalion was given weapons and in January 1943 was departed to battlefield.

On 30 January 1943 "**1th Czechoslovak Independent Field Battalion**" consisted of nearly 1000 man and even some 30 women.

This time between London Exile Government (see next PowerPoint) that demanded light troops for use during anticipated uprising in Czechoslovakia and Communists in Moscow that distrust members of Czechoslovak battalion

When in Busuluk, Communist infiltration of Czechoslovak battalion started illegal organizations of Communist Party formed within members of battalion Commander of battalion , lieutenant colonel Ludvík Svoboda requested Stalin to move the battalion to the front, but penalty from minister of national defence in London To request directly Stalin means to get around superiors!

## **Battle of Sokolovo 1943**

When 1th Czechoslovak Battalion was departed the situation in front line dramatically changed. Originally unit was aimed for offensive operation, but when on 1th March 1943 gained its position got order to conduct defensive fights along Msha-River.

Composition of **1th Czechoslovak Independent Field Battalion** was as when reached its positions as follows:

Commander Col. Ludvík Svoboda

**Infantry Company No. 1**, commander Lt. Otakar Jaroš,

**Infantry Company No. 2**, commander Lt. Jan Kudlič,

**Infantry Company No. 3**, commander Lt. Vladimír Janko,

**Gunfire Company**, commander Lt. Jaroslav Lom-Löhler,

**Antitank Company**, commander Lt. František Sedláček, and

**Mine Company**, commander Lt. Václav Drnek.

Each company has three platoons, mine platoon and medical unit.

1th Czechoslovak Battalion became was subordinated of 25th Division, later on 62th Division, and was part of 3th Tank Army, that composed the decisive formation of Voronezh Front, whose commander was Gen. Golikoff.

Col. Svoboda decided to locate one unit, Company No. 1, in front of defence line in Sokolovo. On 7 March 1943 Germans conduct first attack, but were deflected. Main fight took its place on 8 March 1943. First attack of 6th tank division in the morning hours were deflected, but in afternoon Germans conducted new offensive. Czechoslovak defensive was reached as well as last defensive position around Sokolovo church. Despite the hart defensive the German troops inflicted the Czechoslovak Battalion considerable losses.

But Czechoslovak Battalion fulfilled its task, i.e. to stop the German attack. Situation in Soviet-German front were gradually deteriorated and Czechoslovak Battalion were in the early morning hours on 14 March 1943 forced to leave its position.

## **Ludvík Svoboda**

Lt. Col. Ludvík Svoboda, later promoted to colonel and finally to army general, was one of the most distinguished commanders in Czechoslovak resistance army during Second World War. His appointment to commanding position of first Czechoslovak unit has also symbolic connotation. His surname Svoboda means in Czech language "Freedom". Czechoslovak soldiers than disclaimed "With (Lt. Col.) Freedom for freedom" ("Se Svobodou za svobodu"). Col. Svoboda commanded Czechoslovak units in Fight of Sokolovo in 1943, than during fights in West-Bank Ukraine in 1943 and 1944, and finally in Dukla Pass Operation in 1944. After that he was appointed to be the Minister of National Defence of Czechoslovakia. His career continued also in Communist era. Until 1950 he was member of Czechoslovak government and in 1968 to 1975 he was Czechoslovak president.

## **Czechoslovak Brigade in U.S.S.R.**

After this first battle experience the 1th Czechoslovak Battalion was withdrawn from battle line and transferred to Novochoopersk together with the other Czechoslovak unit that was dislocated in Busuluk. In Novochoopersk transformation to the Czechoslovak Brigade occurred. The number of Czechs and especially Slovaks grown due to gaining of prisoners of wars of Slovak Army. Among other there was unit of Lt. Marcelly or battalion in Nikopol that went to Red Army.

Training of Brigade lasted from spring to September 1943 and also the tank battalion with ca. 40 tanks was formed.

New Czechoslovak military formation – 1sh Czechoslovak Independent Brigade – now consisted of three battalions:

Commander Col. Ludvík Svoboda

**1sh Infantry Battalion,**

**2nd Infantry Battalion,** and



### **Tank Battalion.**

Except these Brigade consisted of Artillery Unit, (spojovací) Company, Pioneer Company, Car Company, and Medical Company.

The Czechoslovak Brigade was subordinated of Supreme Commander of Czechoslovak Units in Soviet Union, General Jan Kratochvíl, and Czechoslovak Military Mission in Moscow.

1th Czechoslovak Independent Brigade was deployed in the battles in the West Bank of Ukraine, in battle of Kiev, in Zhitomir-Berdichew and in Korsun-Shewtchenko Operations as part of 38th Army of Voronezh/1th Ukrainian Front.

On 1 December 1943 brigade took its position in suburb of Kiev. That day assaulted into deceive attack. On 5 December 1943 Brigade was deployed in the main course of Soviet offensive in Kiev. Unit was ordered to attack at 12.30 a.m. During the battle Gunmen Unit invaded into the rear of German position. Then the Brigade undertook harsh fights in ZOO and in plant Bolshevik. Tank Battalion was deployed to cut the withdrawal roads. In the morning of the following day Brigade finished the liquidation of focus of defence and was transferred into rear of Voronezh Front.

After the siege of Kiev the Red Army continued in the following of withdrawal German army.

During December 1943 Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš arrived in Moscow and negotiated with Joseph Stalin. They talked the number of issues, but the most important was making an agreement of alliance. Czechoslovak-Soviet agreement was signed on 12 December 1943. It was the first agreement of its kind between USSR and Central and Eastern European Country and the beginning of formation of Soviet Bloc.

## **Czechoslovak Army Corps 1944 and 1945**

After the Battle of Kiev and in Western Ukraine brigade was moved to the rear to be transformed into corps. In January 1944 formation of 2nd airborne brigade was commenced and in summer 1944 formation of Czechoslovak Army Corps took place. Commander of corps was appointed General Jan Kratochvíl, but he had serious disputes with Soviet commandment.

Slovak National Uprising broken out on 29 August 1944. All executive and legislative power in insurgent territory took over **Slovak National Council** that began to form 1th Czechoslovak Army. The commander of Czechoslovak Army was appointed General Rudolf Viest.

## **Slovak National Uprising and Dukla Pass Battle 1944**

Commandment of Red Army reacted rapidly and within few days prepared operation with the aim to cross the mountains and to help to Slovaks. The so called Dukla Pass Operation was commenced on

8 September 1944 by heavy bombardment of German position. Two days later, on 10 September 1944, Czechoslovak Corps was involved in the operations. The goal of corps was to defeat German position in town Dukla and in Hyrowa Mountain. But the main goal, i.e. to reach town Prešov within 5 days, was not reached. German defenders made use of mountain terrain and its advantages to slow down Soviet advancement and were able to nearly stop it. The Czechoslovak corps could not reach former Czechoslovak borderlines until 6 October 1944, i.e. after one month of fights.

During operation General Jan Kratochvíl was replaced by Ludvík Svoboda according to decision of Soviet commander.

That is why Slovakian uprising army was reinforced with **2nd Airborne Brigade**. But before transfer the brigade was deployed in fights to cross the mountain and suffered considerable losses. Later, on 17 September 1944, to Slovakia the **Czechoslovak Air Regiment** was transferred.

Despite partial success in Dukla Pass Operation the Slovak National Uprising was suppressed by German forces and insurgents changed for guerrilla warfare on 28 October 1944. That is why the Dukla Pass Operation was terminated on 30 October 1944. The fights in Slovak territory continued, but without any significant success. The German units inflicted considerable losses of manpower and weaponry both to Red Army and Czechoslovak Corps; corps alone counted more than 6000 total losses from originally ca. 16 000 men.

Despite the fact that in military way the operation became total failure, operation reached huge political impact. The day 6 October became commemorate day.

## Summary of the Chapter

Second Resistance Movement represents integral part of Czech military tradition. Czechs and Slovaks, and their effort to fight against Nazi regime, successfully ended up by **restoration of Czechoslovak State**.

During 1939 and 1945, despite the fact that beginning of Czechoslovak resistance had different position due to fact that began to form in peace time (in summer 1939) the Czechoslovak resistance and especially its head body, the Czechoslovak exile government and Edvard Beneš, became equal partners of anti-Hitler coalition.

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## CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY 1945 TO 1948

Short period of three years in Czechoslovak history in 1945 to 1948 were not the era of long time expected restoration of independent Czechoslovakia, sometimes referred as **Third Republic** or **People's Democratic Czechoslovakia**. Despite the shortage of time the development was very turbulent and ended by establishing of new totalitarian regime. This time the Nazis were not in charge – but Communists.

There are **four main stages** in this important era. The beginnings of re-gained national sovereignty are the months that followed the end of Second World War, i.e. from April/May 1945 to the October 1945. During this time the state administrative system was formed and authority of Czechoslovak government enforced in its territory; also territorial disputes took place, especially with Poland.

The next period is constitutional stabilization of Czechoslovakia. The **Provisional National Assembly** was established on basis of indirect and non-democratic elections. The changes in political culture of Czechoslovakia were symbolized in fact that **the only six allowed political parties** (including two Communist Parties) decided the result of elections. At the same time the Provisional National Assembly was established the President Edvard Beneš lost his legislative power, i.e. the so called **Beneš' Decrees** were no longer issued.

The third period is time when relations of political movements in Czechoslovakia deteriorated during summer 1947. These movements were represented by political parties. The **two antagonistic blocs** of power represented **the Communists**, i.e. Czechoslovak and Slovak Communist Party, and **anti-Communist formation** that included National Socialist, Christian, and Democratic Party.

The last stage of Third Republic is time of **February Crisis** that ended in coup d'état of Communists. The pre-conditions of crisis were set in early 1948, but final political clash lasted only five days, from 20 to 25th February 1948. After that the Communists represented the only power in Czechoslovakia.

### Onset of Communism

Despite the failure of battle of the Dukla Pass Czechoslovak Army Corps and Red Army made advances in Eastern Slovakia. It meant that exile government in London lost its control over Czechoslovak army and General Ludvík Svoboda, in fact Soviet protégé, made decision independently on his own.

Red Army seized territory of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia but despite Czechoslovak-Soviet agreement exile government was not able to take control over eastern part of Czechoslovakia.

Communists requested establishing of counter-intelligence organization, so called OBZ, abbreviation for Defence Intelligence, realized on 7 January 1945. Its authority was misused by Communist to control Czechoslovak Army Corps and later on to controls police units of army.

In liberated territory of Eastern Slovakia the government was appointed by President Edvard Beneš on 4 April 1945, so called **Košice Government**. The exile government was dissolved and new representative body issued so called **Košice Programme**, i.e. government programme of socialist reforms in Czechoslovakia. Communist also gained the decisive position in government (ministry of interior, of finance, etc.). This was beginning of Sovietisation of Czechoslovak Army and all Czechoslovakia.

## **Cleansing in Czechoslovak Army 1945**

The formation of Czechoslovak Army lasted from May 1945. The conditions of formation were set by **Košice Government Programme**. According to this programme Czechoslovak Army should be formed on basis of Soviet **Red Army**. It meant establishing of **Military Counter-Offensive** (see below), of Political Commissars, and of acceptance of norms of Red Army, even uniforms.

The Košice Government Programme is the begging of struggle between Communist and non-Communist orientation of army.

The first step in so called Sovietisation of Army, i.e. setting the army on basis of Red Army, was the First Cleansing that took place in 1945.

At the end of July 1945 in Czechoslovak army served 15 836 officers, but intended number of officers was set to be 22 225 due to fact that army itself consisted of 190 000 men. Despite this acute shortage of officers the cleansing was done.

The Counter-Offensive, ruled by Communists, attempted to discredit number of selected generals and officers, especially with the ones with non-Communist past and orientation. It meant that Communist "class criteria" was applied. The result was that only 50 % of higher officers and generals were accepted, but 80 to 90 % of low-level officers and staff sergeant.

The aim of the Counter-Offensive was to eliminate the members of office corps regardless of their past. The intention was to get rid of the members of Western resistance movement. For example in group of low-level officers and staff sergeant were 90 % of accepted who did not join any

form in resistance during Second World War, while in second group of higher officers and general some 50 % did.

That is why some **higher officers and general entered Communist party in order to avoid persecution**, but still majority of them did not take any interest of politics.

## **Struggle for Political Affiliation of Army**

According to Košice Government Programme **Counter-Intelligence**, known under abbreviation "OBZ" (in Czech "obranné zpravodajství"), and Political Commissars, officially **Deputy of Commander for Enlightenment**, were both adopted from Red Army model and misused by Communists who took control over them.

Also Communists convinced number of generals to join Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, among them there were Generals Jaroslav Brož, Karel Čejka, Štefan Drgač, Vladimír Drnec, František Kouřil, František Papoušek, Jan Satorie, Zdeněk Novák etc.

Also political position of army in political system had changed. Soldier re-obtained suffrage and could join political party which for forbidden in First Czechoslovak Republic. This fact led to disputes among officers and of polarization of officers' corps.

Communists also demand to promote or to recognize ranks of members of **revolutionary guards** and guerrilla fighters who in fact did not had any military education. Finally, government pardoned requested education level for more than 1300 officers in April 1947.

## **Second Cleansing of Czechoslovak Army 1946**

In 1946 Parliament passed act of implementation of second cleansing within members of Czechoslovak army. But in fact this cleansing was aimed at the non-Communist soldiers and officers in order to eliminate officers of First Czechoslovak Republic and to get places to gain new, young officers.

According to the law nearly 13 000 officers were registered for cleansing, but some 12 000 had been accepted. It meant the failure of Communists to conduct a final purge of officers. The result was that 70 % of officer corps were officers of First Czechoslovak Republic.

In fact cleansing leads to national issue within Czechoslovak army, due to fact that majority refused officers were Slovaks; Slovaks had to serve in army of Slovak Republic and majority of them took part in campaign against U.S.S.R. (!) or they compromised themselves other ways. After the cleansing Slovaks represents only 3.4 % of officer corps.

## Intelligence Service of Czechoslovakia

In period 1945 to 1948 five intelligence service authorities existed and all of them were under control of Communists. In army it was mentioned:

**Counter-intelligence (OBZ)**, commander General Bedřich Reicin, and

**2nd department of General Staff**, commander Anton Rašla, who was replaced by Karel Hanuš.

In Ministry of the Interior:

**Department of Political Intelligence Z**, commander Josef Bártík, who was replaced by Bedřich Pokorný, with provincial department of security, commander Emil Hršel, and

**State Security**, commander Jan Hora, later on ominously infamous Státní bezpečnost (StB).

### Counter-Intelligence

Main task of Counter-Intelligence (OBZ) was supervision over all military personnel, especially officers of all ranks. But OBZ according to Communist orders were aimed at officers from the West, members of Western armies who married English, American, or German women, who had negative attitude towards government programme and officers of Western armies in friendly contacts with persons from United Kingdom, United States etc.

Above mentioned groups were observed, their correspondence with foreign countries were checked, their relations, opinions, and statements they did were registered.

In 1946 to 1947 OBZ prepared lists of potentially opponents to Communist regime who served in decisive positions in army, in Ministry of the Interior, and in other selected organizations. These lists were refilled with information that gained Communist Party.

The most important think is fact that these activities were **entirely contrary to existing law and military regulations**. Counter-intelligence allegedly used wiretapping of all important representatives of Czechoslovak army, i.e. of Minister of Defence, but also of president of Czechoslovakia (!).

Counter-intelligence prepared arrangements in case of Communist coup d'état in order to paralyze army in case of civil war.



## Communist Coup d'état in February 1948

During February 1948 Communist implement long time prepared coup d'état. After summer 1947 the political system got stuck in internal crisis; between both political blocs, i.e. Communist and anti-Communist there was stalemate situation.

In early January 1948 the misusing of police by Communists was revealed. But Communist Minister of Interior Václav Nosek did not take part in government meeting on 21 March 1948. In this situation anti-Communist members of government conceive a plan. In this plane all non-Communists members of government were obliged to resign and to **bring dissolution of whole government**, including Communists Ministers, especially Prime Minister Klement Gottwald. According to Czechoslovak constitution in case more than half of all members of government resign, whole government resigns.

This result should lead to:

**premature elections**, in which Communists were not expect to win, or to

**appointment of new government** by President. Also in this case there was only little chance that Communists became members of this government.

But in reality the plan did not happened. The resignation involved four ministers of **National Socialist Party**, four ministers of **Christian Party**, and four ministers of **Democratic Party**. That counted twelve ministers of 26 members of government. It was not enough to resignation of whole government.

In fact it ended in situation, when government continued in existence, but without control of anti-Communist parties. Communists made use this fact and overtook the whole executive power and commenced persecution their opponents. In only five days the regime of one political party was established.

Communists mobilized their supporters, especially Labour Union, in order to start demonstrations and manifestation. In these meetings the request of accepting resignations of anti-Communist politicians was posted. To support this demand Communists also established para-military formation, so called **People's Militia** on 21 February 1948, and in all Czechoslovak cities the **Action Committee**, self-declared authorities that attempted, and in majority of cases successfully, to replace the organs of local self-government.

The most important day was 25 February 1948. That day **President Edvard Beneš accepted resignation** of anti-Communists ministers that meant continuation of Klement Gottwald government.

That day president also appointed new ministers, all Communists, or persons who were favoured to Communist Party.

This Communist government was able to take support of National Assembly; even non-Communist representatives did not object the Communist take-over. During March the purge of National Assembly and in self-governing local bodies were conducted. The coup d'état was finished in manipulated elections in which citizens were supposed to vote either for candidate of **National Front**, cover name for Communists and their allies, or against. The result was that nearly 90 % votes got for National Front on 26 May 1948.

Due to activities of Counter-Intelligence Czechoslovak Army did not involve in political events. For example anti-Communist officers and soldiers were sent to vacation on training courses out of Prague during February 1948 etc. But in all case selected a few units devoted to Communist Party prepared to strike in Prague on behalf of Communists.

## Summary of Chapter

The period of Third Republic was short time in history of Czechoslovakia, but it was also one of the most decisive moments. This short period is history of onset of Communism that ruled over Czechoslovakia for more than forty years.

The victory of Communists in Czechoslovakia could be interpreted as **multiple failures**. At first it is **failure of society** that tolerated the fall of principles of democracy and enabled their infiltration in government and administrative.

Onset of Communism is also **failure of political culture and political system**. In political culture the gradual decay of democratic principle continued in whole three years, while in political system the Communists were able to gain the power that was in fact out of any control of both constitutional bodies and society; especially dominant were Communists in Ministry of Interior, i.e. in security forces.

The last but not the least the rise of Communists was the **failure of Czechoslovak Army**. Czechoslovak Army was in difficult position. On one side soon became object of Communist path to coup d'état, on second side the Army was misused by Communists. But the most important is fact that despite Communist infiltration the Czechoslovak Army continued in tradition of non-political position of Army in the way it was during First Republic. It meant that army served in favour of Czechoslovakia regardless inner situation, regardless of political system. The result was fact that during so called February Revolution of 1948 the Czechoslovak did not interfered.

In fact after 1945 Communists target the army in order to prepare the conditions for coup d'état.

These are the preconditions of the fact that for following forty years Czechoslovak Army was misused by Communist Regime and became **object of harsh persecution**.

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## **COMMUNIST REGIME AND THE THIRD CZECHOSLOVAK RESISTANCE MOVEMENT 1948 TO 1968**

Communist coup d'état in 1948 was beginning of Totalitarian Regime and also of so called Third Resistance Movement. This movement was formed in 1948 and 1948, but in contrary to first and second movement, members of third resistance did not ever unite for common action. Third resistance was limited into separate actions with unsuccessful attempt to establish supreme resistance authority that could gain recognition of Western powers; this supreme authority should be Council of Independent Czechoslovakia.

There were several reasons, why the third resistance did not unify into common action. The first and most important was fact that no Western power was in military conflict with Czechoslovakia. Then there was fact that among members of Third Resistance Movement existed important differences. There were members of both 1939 and 1948 exiles abroad. There were also disputes about constitutional position of Slovakia; number of Slovak emigrants did not support fight against Communism, because they themselves were in struggle for independent Slovakia, i.e. against Czechoslovakia. The last, but not the least was fact that there were not any decisive persons to lead resistance movement.

There are two main stages of third resistance. In fact so called Third Resistance Movement existed in whole period of Cold War, but there are very huge differences between the first stage lasting 1948 to 1956 and second in years 1956 to 1989.

In the first stage the basis of resistance movement was set. In Czechoslovakia and abroad few opponent organizations were formed. In 1956 Hungarian Crisis and its occupation by Soviet Army of formally sovereign state proofed that Western powers were not going to help any of country in Soviet Bloc. In next stage the intensity of resistance decreased, especially in Czechoslovakia. Resistance than became limited into occasional proclamation and formal activities in associations and organizations.

Occupation and new wave of emigrants seemed to restore the resistance movement, but opposite was true. The rests of Third Czechoslovak Resistance Movement over-lived in 1989 and after Velvet Revolution ceased to exist.

## Sovietisation of Czechoslovak Army

The process of sovietisation of Czechoslovak army continued rapidly after February 1948. Within few years important personal changes were realized in Ministry of Defence and in Czechoslovak Army that began called Czechoslovak People's Army.

**Ludvík Svoboda**, Minister of National Defence was dismissed in early 1950. The reason was fact that he was not able to secure realization of demands of Soviet General Staff. New minister of defence became **Alexej Čepička**, Soviet protégé, before that civilian and Attorney General who was in moment of appointment of minister of defence given rank of General.

Soon after his appointment implementation of Soviet urges, codes, regulations, and even Soviet uniform was realized.

During his time Czechoslovak Army was entirely under control of Communist Party and became instrument of Communist regime. It also meant that army obeyed decisions of Communist Party, not of state authorities (government or parliament).

This situation was done due to huge personal changes in officer corps. In 1954 in army there were 75 % new officers, i.e. military men, who **became officers after February 1948**. Only one quarter had GSCE exams/A level that was condition for being officer.

The final situation was that Czechoslovak army was misused during repression of civil disorder during June 1953.

## Political Trials

Political trial, or praxis of political trials, was part of Communist repression. In unlawful trials thousands of innocent people were sentenced to serious penalties that were in contrary to valid law. These trials took place from 1948 to 1955, but continued in next years. But the last death penalties were carried out in 1954 (General Josef Musil, General Osvald Závodský etc.)

In first stage of these trials both alleged and real opponents were sentenced.

In second stage leading officials of Communist Party were sentenced, among them high representative of Central Committee, especially **General Secretary Rudolf Slánský**. Due to fact that he was very close to Security Department, number of its members were executed with him, for example head of Counter-Intelligence General **Bedřich Reicin**.

But after 1955 rehabilitation and re-examination of trials took place. The first stage re-examination lasted from 1955 to 1957, but did not bring any decisive results. Yet the second re-examination was connected with rehabilitation in 1962 to 1963.

## **Counter-Intelligence**

As it was said before, **Counter-intelligence** (OBZ) became decisive repressive authority in 1945 to 1948 and was entirely controlled by Communists. After February 1948 the role of Counter-Intelligence in regime repressions increased.

The members of OBZ did not respect the law. Inner unofficial principle of OBZ was claim that **Counter-Intelligence stands above law** (!). Even documents and inner rules of OBZ contained regulations that were in contrary to law and constitution. Note that minister of defence was former General Attorney.

OBZ did not respect the law in its work. For example inner documents enabled to use of instigator. Also during investigations OBZ used unlawful methods of interrogation, especially physical violence.

Immediately after February 1948 OBZ commenced persecution of officer corps, i.e. long time ago prepared arrangement in cleansing within soldiers. Its course was not surprisingly cruel.

## **Cleansing of Officers**

During cleansing 25 generals were dismissed from army and immediately OBZ request their arrest.

With selected Generals political trials took place. The first one was trial with **General Heliodor Píka**.

General Heliodor Píka served during Second World War in Moscow as Chief of Czechoslovak Military Mission (see T2 Second Czechoslovak Resistance). Despite the place of his duty, he was entirely devoted to London Exile Government and later on the democratic principles of First Czechoslovak Republic. In 1948 General Heliodor Píka became dangerous to Communist regime. As Chief of Military Mission he was acknowledged with number of secret information about Soviet Union, especially of Soviet intelligence and its methods.

That is why the Counter-Intelligence was given task by Soviet Intelligence (!) to eliminate him any means necessary.

General Heliodro Píka was put in trial In January 1949 and sentenced to death. His execution was performed in June 1949. He became one of the earliest and of most known victims of regime repression.

## **Action D**

The officers that were dismissed from Czechoslovak army after February 1948 were than objects of regime persecution. Counter-Intelligence prepared so called **Action D**. The aim of action was to put the dismissed officers into Forced Labour Camps. The action was repeated, together six Actions D took place from 20 April 1949 to 11 September 1950.

The commission of Counter-Intelligence was established. The only goal of commission was to choose who will be put into camps. Besides this authority also the Appeal Commission was established, but in no case this commission did not change decision of first commission.

For concentration of the officers the officer camp in jail **Mírov** was created.

In total 263 men were sentenced, including three who died during being imprisoned in camp; according to re-examination commission 197 officers were put in camp in contrary to law and accused OBZ commission, but no one was criminally responsible.

## **Action LUX**

Meantime Counter-Intelligence prepared another persecution under cover name **Action LUX**. For commencing operation five officers under commandment of **Jaroslav Pavlíček** were enlisted. All members of this group worked undercover and should not maintain other relations, also worked separately in special rooms etc.

Task of this special group was to **explore London archives, archives of intelligence service** of First Czechoslovak Republic and **archives of Slovak army** during Second World War.

Priority was to find compromising material, especially to accuse members of **London intelligence** group working under Colonel František Moravec.

Gained information was used during preparation of political trials.



During Action LUX list of person proposed to be arrested was prepared and later on they really were.

## **Formation of the Third Czechoslovak Resistance Movement**

After February 1948 number of non-Communist Czechoslovak politician left Czechoslovakia for exile. They went to Germany and then to France, United Kingdom, and especially to United States. In Washington **Council of Free Czechoslovakia** was established of members of Czechoslovak government and Parliament in 1949. The president of Council became Petr Zenkl, former Vice-Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia. But there were serious disputes among members about political orientation and furthermore personal animosities. That is why in early 1950s the Council broke into two organizations. Later on those organizations re-established unified Council of Free Czechoslovakia, but its significance decayed into formal institution.

In Czechoslovakia attempts to form resistance groups were undertaken. Their goals and methods differed. The most important was to maintain contact between home and foreign resistance. But group of **Milada Horáková**, member of National Socialist Party, was revealed and she and her companies were stand in trial and sentenced to death. Later on she became significant symbol of fight against Communist and innocent victim of Communist repression.

In these days it is hard to say, how large was Third Czechoslovak Resistance Movement. That is why because Communists itself, especially State Security (Státní bezpečnost, StB) initiated formation of these groups in order reveal potentially opponents. After formation and “revelation” of these groups majority of their members were sentenced to death or to long-lasting imprisonment. Among these groups there were for example **Group Světлана**, formed of former partisans, **Group of Ladislav Malý** that killed three Communist functionaries in Babice, and number of others. The one exception was Mašín Brothers (see chapter below).

But not only politicians, but also young men left Czechoslovakia in order to enlist in Czechoslovak military units and to fight against Communist. The only country, the same like in First and Second World War, willing to accept these men was France and its Foreign Legion. This time Czechoslovak men enlist with no advantages in case the war. Due to fact that France never got into conflict with Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak members of Foreign Legion were obliged to fight for political interest of France, among others in Vietnam and Algeria in 1950s.

## **Mašín Brothers**

One of the most distinguished resistance groups was formed in lately 1940s around two brothers, older **Ctirad** and Younger **Josef Mašín Jr.**, sons of Czech General Josef Mašín,

member of Czech resistance group Three Kings (see T2 Second Resistance Movement) who was killed by Nazis.

Mašín Brothers started with small “resistance” actions like sabotages of regime economy. In early 1950s they formed little resistance group together with their companions; those were **Milan Paumer**, **Zbyněk Janata**, and **Václav Švéda**. During that time they decided to attempt to gain weapons in order to establish military resistance.

Since its beginning they decided to work separately, without any connections to other representatives of resistance movement. This strategy showed to be fruitful due to fact that they remained under cover until the moment they decided to escape from Czechoslovakia.

Their first larger activity was robbery of police office in small town **Chlumec nad Cidlinou** in Northern Bohemia in night on 12 to 13 September 1951. The action was a failure. One officer was killed, but they did not get the guns. The next action was robbery of next police office in small town **Čelákovice** on 28 September 1951. This time Mašín Brothers gained the weapons, but next officer was killed.

Next action was prepared in Čáslav on 2 August 1952. This was the action during which large amount of money was gained, but also two civilians were killed.

Next year the group of Mašín Brothers decided to escape. In the beginning of October 1953 all five of them **crossed the Czechoslovak-German borders** near Dresden. For first few days they travelled unrecognized in Eastern-German territory in order to get into Berlin and there cross once again the borders. This time into Western Europe.

After one week incident in railroad station **Uckro** happened. Their presence had been revealed and they got in gunfire with policemen; one of them, Zbyněk Janata, was captured. In few hours Soviet Army and German Militia was in alert looking for Mašín Brothers. It is said that some 20 000 men were searching for them. One day they were nearly revealed. In forest near city Waldow they were surrounded by militia and one of them, Václav Švéda, was injured and later on captured. In following three weeks they hide themselves in country around Berlin and finally, in the beginning of November 1953, the rest of Mašín Brothers, Ctirad and Josef Mašín and Milan Paumer reached Berlin.

They were interrogated by U.S. Counterintelligence Corps and then they entered U.S. Army in order to continue in fight against Communist within rank of army. That is why they chose 82nd Airborne Division and were trained in Fort Bragg.

But in the second half 1950s they left army and also resistance movement. Still up to present day their deeds divide Czech society in meaning whether they were members of resistance movement or villains.

## **Prague Spring and Occupation of 1968**

Since mid-1967 important changes in leading of Communist Party and of Czechoslovak state took place. These changes were result of **inner power struggle among leading Communists**.

During January 1968 meeting of Central Committee the First Secretary **Antonín Novotný** resigned and his successor became **Alexander Dubček**, representative of so called **Liberal or Reform Group** of Communists. Three months later, in March 1968, Antonín Novotný resigned also as Czechoslovak President. It meant that position of **Conservative Group** of Communists was weakened. Soon after that important personnel changes occurred in government and in Parliament.

The Reform Group of Communists realized number of measurement in aim to reform Czechoslovak political system and Czechoslovak economy. The unitary Czechoslovak state was changed into be **federation of Czech and Slovak republic**, central planned economy were set in selected laissez faire principle. This period is known as **Prague Spring**. Despite the name it did not last only one season, but in fact it is period from January 1968 to April 1969, when the position of Conservative Group was re-stored.

During 1968 key representatives of Czechoslovak army revised **Czechoslovak military doctrine**. Its goals originally derived from Soviet doctrine. The aim was to conduct defence fights in territory of Czechoslovakia in assumed direction of NATO offensive, or to support Soviet offensive in direction towards Bavarian territory. In both forms this doctrine was in favour of Soviet Union, not of Czechoslovakia.

In this situation new doctrine was formed. New goal was **to protect Czechoslovak territory** in any possible directions of enemy offensive; that also could meant that army was prepared for offensive from East.

The Soviet Generals were in this situation afraid of security situation of Middle Europe. The Czechoslovakia was the only country without permanent dislocation of Soviet

troops. During summer 1968 military exercise under code name **Šumava** of armed forces of countries of Warsaw Pact took place in Czechoslovakia in order to intimidate the Reform Group of Communists. It is said that when the last Soviet troops left Czechoslovak territory, the number of weapons and military gadgets were hidden in Czechoslovakia to be used during occupation.

The Reform Group continued in reforms. This fact became pretext for occupation of Czechoslovakia by forces of countries of Warsaw Pact.

Under code name **Vltava** armies of five countries crossed Czechoslovak borders in night from 20 to 21 August 1968. Occupation of Czechoslovakia began. Five countries took part in occupation, Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Eastern Germany, but National People's Army did not cross the borders. In total 750 000 men were involved. It means that occupation of Czechoslovakia was the **largest military operation** after the end of Second World War.

The representatives of Czechoslovakia were kidnapped into Moscow and there they were forced to sign so called Moscow Protocol, i.e. legalization of occupation of Czechoslovakia. Then Agreement on Temporary Stay of Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia was closed on 16 October 1968.

According to plans of occupants Labour-Peasant Government should be appointed. But members of this assumed government did not get acceptance neither of Communist Party, nor of society.

Despite the fact that political aims were not fulfilled, the whole state became under control of Soviet Army. Czechoslovak army obeyed the orders of President Ludvík Svoboda not to resist at any cost. Later on new cleansing in Czechoslovak Army were commenced.

## Summary of Chapter

The period 1948 to 1968 represents the era of totalitarian Communist regime. Czechoslovak Republic was fully controlled by Communist Party, which was – itself – controlled by Soviet Communist Party. It meant that despite formal state sovereignty, Czechoslovak Republic was only satellite of Soviet Union.

The Communists had to fulfil their own aims that were in contrary to members of Second Czechoslovak Resistance who fought for freedom of Czechoslovakia in West. They fought against totalitarian regime too! That is why those men soon became object of Communist persecution that in many cases ended with dead.

In this situation the **Third Resistance Movement** was formed both in Czechoslovakia and abroad. The aim of the members of resistance was to re-store democratic regime. In comparison to situation in First and Second World War the Third Resistance Movement acted in condition of Cold War that meant the formal relations of western countries to Czechoslovakia were peaceful. That is why representative of resistance lacked support of power. Moreover there were important disputes that disabled any broad co-operation of all members of resistance movement. The result was the fact that Third Resistance Movement reduced its activity on separated actions. Despite these deficiencies, the most important was its moral statement.

During Communist regime **Czechoslovak armed forces** were fully controlled by Communist regime and were not in position to interfere into politics. Only Communists were supposed to reach high ranks. The result was the fact that Czechoslovak army, especially its Counter-Intelligence, were part of regime repression system. Moreover, Czechoslovak army was also executor of Soviet commands and did not fulfil its main task, i.e. to protect Czechoslovak people. This was clear in 1968 during Soviet occupations. Army obeyed decision of government and no one soldier resist to aggression.

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