



The Second World War Memorial

Hrabyně



Guide



Slezské
zemské
muzeum



Museum complex and Memorial



Symbolic cemetery

The Second World War Memorial

The Second World War Memorial in the village of Hrabyně is one of the six exhibition premises of the Silesian Museum. It is located in the immediate vicinity of the site of one of the most intense battles to have taken place on the territory of the modern-day Czech Republic during the Second World War. The Memorial aims chiefly to illustrate the history of the Second World War period, acquire thematically related exhibits and gather information on members of the Czechoslovak home and foreign resistance and on the victims of persecution by the Nazi regime. It also focuses on the study of and research into the wartime period.

The foundation stone of the memorial building was laid in April 1970. Construction work was begun in 1976 according to plans drawn up by the architects of Stavoprojekt Ostrava, and the memorial was officially opened four years later, on 29th April 1980. At the time it was known as the Memorial to the Ostrava Offensive.

The Memorial has been part of the Silesian Museum since 1992, and in 2000 the Czech government declared it a national monument to the Second World War on the territory of the Czech Republic. The complex includes a symbolic cemetery containing the names of more than 13,000 fallen Red Army soldiers, as well as those of inhabitants of Silesia and north Moravia who fell on all fronts during the War or who perished in concentration camps. For this reason the Memorial is an important venue for commemorative and formal events.

'A Time of Destruction and Hope': exhibition

The main building in the Memorial contains the exhibition *A Time of Destruction and Hope*, which relates the events of the Second World War from a military and political point of view, while not forgetting the experiences of the civilian population, culture or the economy. It also tells the story of the participation of Czechoslovak fighters on all fronts during the Second World War and of civilians involved in the home resistance movement.

The exhibition is a dynamic one and constantly changes; in practice, this means that every year its contents are refreshed and supplemented depending on

the chosen theme of the respective exhibition season. The aim of this is to allow visitors to experience the exhibition based on authentic artefacts, many of which were donated to the museum by witnesses to or direct participants in the battle.

Info kiosks and touchscreen terminals allow visitors to search for information including period documents, photographs and texts. The museum also contains a historic film collage, created by director Evald Schorm for the original memorial exhibition.



View of Exhibition

Memorial Hall

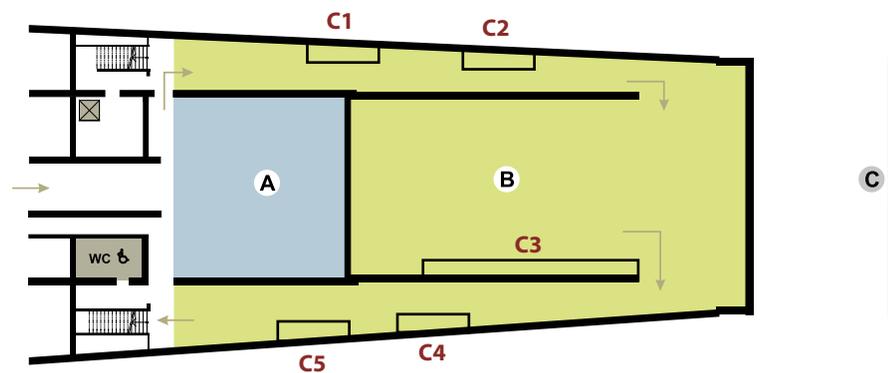


Memorial hall with relief and sarcophagus

The centrally-located Memorial Hall contains authentic artefacts that symbolically commemorate all elements of the resistance that took part in the fight to liberate Czechoslovakia. The central focus of the exhibition is a sarcophagus containing samples of earth from 26 places where Czechoslovak citizens fought and died between the years 1939-45.

The relief on the end wall is entitled *To You goes our Gratitude and Love* and was created by the sculptor Stanislav Hanzík in 1979.

Due to its symbolic nature, the Memorial Hall serves as a venue for Second World War commemorative events.



Ground floor

- A – Memorial Hall
- B – Battle scene
- C – Symbolic Cemetary

Construction of border fortifications, the Munich Agreement and the occupation of Czechoslovakia

Not long after Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933 it became clear that it was only a matter of time until Germany would seek to subjugate Europe, and many countries, amongst them Czechoslovakia, started building permanent fortification systems along their borders.

Czechoslovakia, which had a very long border with Germany, began the construction of fortifications in 1936, with the completion of the entire system scheduled for 1946. The model of a type-37 LO bunker shows how, by 1938, there were already over 10,000 small fortresses (shown here at scale of 1:1) and over 200 heavy-

duty structures, as well as 9 artilleries towers under construction.

Type-37 structures were fitted with one or two light or heavy machine-guns, placed in embrasures, one or two periscopes placed in the roof and a chute to allow the release of defensive grenades. Bunkers were designed to be operated by a crew of five to seven and constructed out of reinforced concrete, the walls and ceiling having a thickness of 80 cm, and sometimes 120 cm (enhanced durability). Lighter fortification structures were also covered in soil embankments for improved resistance to artillery.

The end of the 1930s saw an increase in the separatist tendencies of the German inhabitants of Czechoslovakia's border regions. The Czechoslovak government responded to this in May 1938 by declaring partial, and on 23rd September 1938 full, mobilisation.

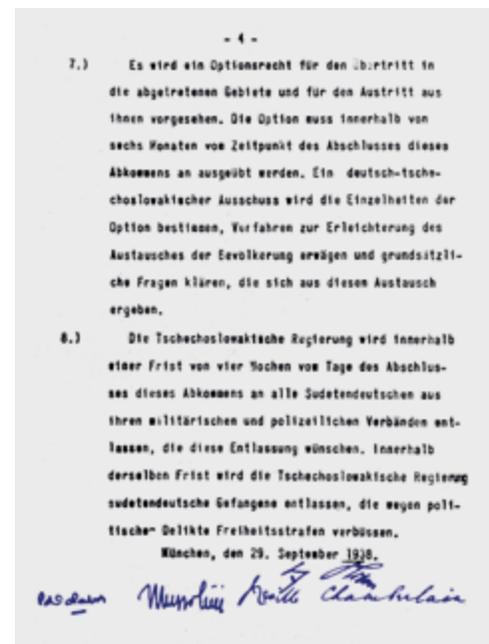
However, this did not prevent the representatives of four of the Great Powers – Germany, Italy, Great Britain and France (Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Neville Chamberlain and Édouard Daladier) – from signing the Munich Agreement on 30th September 1938. This resulted in the annexation of the Czechoslovak border territories, with an area of 28,643 km² and a population of 3.5 million, by Germany. Territorial claims were pressed, too, by Poland, which demanded the cession of the Těšín region, and Hungary, which sought to acquire the south of Slovakia and part of Subcarpathian Ruthenia.



Model of fortifications contained in the exhibition and overall view with "Czech hedgehog" anti-tank obstructions



Corridor in MOS 19 Alej fort with type-26 light machine-gun



Closing page of the Munich Agreement, with signatures



Signing of the Munich Agreement



Group photograph of members of the 4th Border Regiment



Side embrasure with machine-gun

Creation of Czechoslovak military units in the USSR (Cabinet 1)



Gates to Fort Saint-Jean in Marseille, which belonged to the Foreign Legion

Shortly after the occupation, which took place over the 14th and 15th March, thousands of Czechs and Slovaks left the Protectorate in order to take an active part in the fight to liberate their homeland. Fugitives went to Poland, where the so-called Czechoslovak Legion was formed in Krakow in May 1939. With the consent of the French government, many members of this body joined the French Foreign Legion, while others went to the Middle East and Palestine.

The remainder of the legion stayed on Polish territory. Following the invasion of Poland by the Soviet Union on 17th September 1939, most of the legion, under the leadership of Lt.-Col. Ludvík Svoboda, found itself within the operational zone of the Soviet army, where its troops were sent to internment camps. After the outbreak of war and occupation of Poland by the German army, refugees from the Protectorate left via a different route, going through Slovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia to the Middle East and France.

After the Soviet Union was invaded by Germany on 22nd June 1941, official contact was initiated between the USSR and the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London. The signature of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Military Pact of 18th July 1941 allowed the organisation of

a Czechoslovak military unit in the town of Buzuluk in the USSR. Following an announcement on Soviet radio and newspapers in January 1942, Czechoslovak citizens started to gather here from all across the Soviet Union. Prisoners held in NKVD* camps were also released so that they could serve in the army. 15th July 1942 saw the official creation of the Czechoslovak 1st Independent Field Battalion in the USSR.

The items displayed in the cabinet belonged to members of the Czechoslovak military unit that was created in the Soviet Union after 1941.

* *Narodnyj komissariat vnutrennikh del* – USSR government body responsible for internal security and intelligence



ID document of member of Czechoslovak military unit, including the signature of commander L. Svoboda



Cabinet 1 – corridor



Visa – transit permit issued by the Czechoslovak consulate in Krakow in 1939



Internment camp for Czechoslovak soldiers in Suzdal (USSR)



Stamped release document from Oranki internment camp for Czechoslovak soldiers (USSR)



Ludvík Svoboda, commander of the Czechoslovak military unit in the USSR

From Sokolovo to Dukla (The church in Sokolovo)



Church in Sokolovo, which served as the Czechoslovakian command centre

The centre of the Czechoslovakian defence in its battle with German forces trying to fight their way through to the city of Kharkov was the church in the village of Sokolovo.

On 27th January 1943 the Czechoslovakian field battalion received its battle flag and departed for the front. On 1st March 1943 the unit arrived in Kharkov, where they almost immediately entered a defined sector of the front along the Mzha river, blocking the enemy's path to the city. To this end, the platoon of Lt. Otakar Jaroš moved to the town of Sokolovo to construct a defence system. Four days later the Germans began an attack on Sokolovo. In a hard-fought battle, the Czechoslovak unit lost a hundred men, with 56 soldiers wounded and 20 taken prisoner by the Germans, none of whom survived captivity. In this action, 350 Czechoslovak soldiers were confronted with a numerically superior German force of 2,500.

Lt. Otakar Jaroš, who based his command in the church at Sokolovo, was also killed in the battle. He was the first foreigner to be awarded the title Hero of the USSR. The battalion was then transferred to the town of Novokhopersk, where it was reorganised to form the Czechoslovak 1st Independent Brigade in the USSR and placed on the front line in the battle of Kiev in November 1943.

Up until March 1944 the brigade saw action at Ruda, Belaya Tserkov and Zhashkov. Following its transfer to Rovno it recruited around 12,000 Czechs from the Volhynia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia regions. In April 1944 the unit was reorganised to form the Czechoslovakian 1st Army Corps in the USSR, which, together with the 38th Army and the Soviet 1st Guards Army, participated in the Carpatho-Dukla Offensive.



Diorama – church



Czechoslovakian unit before departure to the front, January 1943

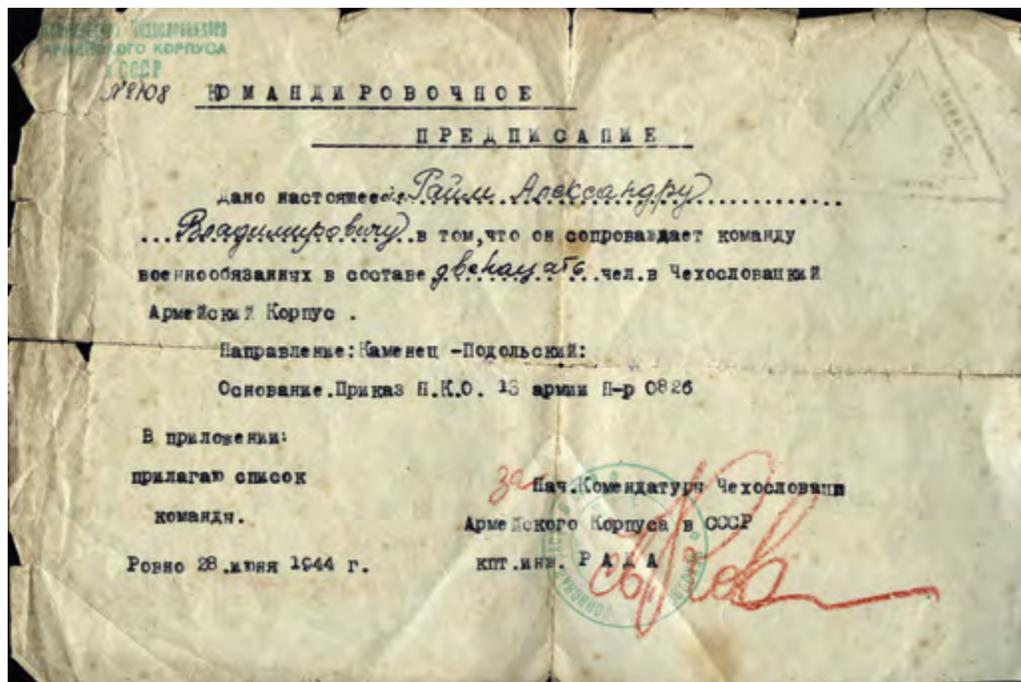


Lt.-Col. Otakar Jaroš, Hero of the USSR



Marie Lastovecká, member of the Czechoslovakian army unit, who served as a sniper at Sokolovo

Carpatho-Dukla Offensive (Cabinet 2)



Confirmation in Russian that A. Rajm has brought 12 soldiers to the Czechoslovakian army unit

The Carpatho-Dukla Offensive, in which Czechoslovak units participated, together with the Soviet 38th Army and 1st Guards Army, in September and October 1944, was intended to assist the Slovak National Uprising over a period of four days. In the opening days of the battle, however, the corps sustained massive losses, following which Marshal Ivan Stepanovich Konev dismissed its commander, Gen. Jan Kratochvíl, on 10th September, appointing Gen. Ludvík Svoboda in his place. In this, Konev was overstepping his authority as commander of front-line forces, as changing the leadership of the Czechoslovak units was the responsibility of the Ministry for the Defence of the Nation. However, the reason for Kratochvíl's dismissal was not the loss of life, but the fact that Gen. Kratochvíl, who had arrived in 1943 from Great Britain, was not, due to his loyalty to the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile, acceptable to either the Soviet command or the Czechoslovak Communist Party; this had been the case since his initial appointment to the command of the Czechoslovak 1st Army Corps on 18th May 1944.

During this incredibly hard-fought, two-month long battle, the Czechoslovak and Soviet units inflicted massive loss of life and hardware on the German Army. However, they broke German resistance only at the cost of massive losses of their own – over 19,000 Soviet soldiers and 1,800 members of the Czechoslovak 1st Army Corps fell in the fighting, with 4,500 Czechoslovaks being wounded. On 6th October 1944 the Czechoslovak units set foot in their homeland and began its liberation.

The photographs and artefacts contained in this display cabinet commemorate the participation of Czechoslovakian soldiers in the Carpatho-Dukla Offensive.



Cabinet 2



Tank driver Rudolf Jasiok – fell at Dukla on 30th September 1944



Member of Czechoslovakian army unit – nurse



Ceremonial gun salute following the Battle of the Dukla Pass, October 1944

Ostrava-Opava Offensive (Battle scene diorama – house)



Overall photograph of battle scene

The replica of the house was built according to period photographs and furnished with authentic furniture, mostly from Hrabyně; for example the glass in the doors of the sideboard was hit by shots from Soviet soldiers during fighting in the centre of the village.

The campaign, intended to liberate northern Moravia and Silesia, began on the territory of Poland on 10th March 1945. The Soviet forces of the 4th Ukrainian Front, 265,000 men strong, were faced with the 155,000-strong 'Heinrici' German battle group, commanded by Gen. Walther Nehring.

Five weeks later, fighting had progressed to Czechoslovakian territory and the armies fought over every village. A particularly fierce battle took place for control of Hrabyně (liberated on 27th April after a week of fighting), whose position on a raised hill meant it was an important point on the road to Ostrava. The battle for liberation resulted in the destruction of 80% of the village, which was one of the most seriously war-damaged of any in the whole of Czechoslovakia.

The Ostrava-Opava Offensive had major consequences for Silesia. Dozens of villages were deserted and burned down, and towns such as Bílovec, Opava, Fulnek and Klimkovice lay in ruins. Silesia needed rapid assistance. While the government made funds available

to restart the economy, none were available for private property. These were offered by the nationwide *Building Silesia* solidarity campaign, which was announced in the village of Ostrá Hůrka near Opava on 23rd September 1945, and was initiated by Helena Salichová and Jindřich Šajnar.

The diorama shows the situation in the village of Hrabyně following the departure of the Soviet forces – all that remained in the village were ruined houses, gardens, and a large amount of damaged military hardware.



Hrabyně was amongst the most heavily-damaged communities during the War



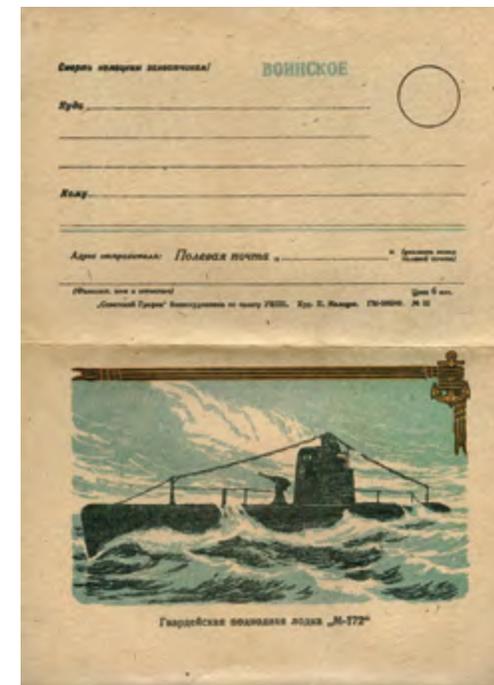
Photograph of battle scene



Bolatice – destroyed Jagdpanzer 38 Hetzer (German) tank destroyer



Soviet sappers during the Ostrava-Opava Offensive



Pre-printed Soviet field postcard, also used by Czechoslovak forces



Progress of Czechoslovakian and Soviet forces from Poland to Czechoslovakian territory during the Ostrava-Opava Offensive

Czechoslovak pilots and members of the tank brigade during the Ostrava-Opava Offensive (Cabinet 3)



Display cabinet 3

The Czechoslovak pilots who took part in fighting on the territory of Moravia and Silesia were members of the Czechoslovak 1st Mixed Air Division in the USSR, which was subordinate to the 8th Air Army of Lt.-Gen. Vasily Nikolaevich Zhdanov. They primarily used Lavochkin La-5 FN and Il-2m3 fighter planes. During the fight for liberation, this division undertook a total of 567 missions and dropped up to 5,000 tonnes of bombs. A total of 9 pilots perished in the line of duty.

The deployment of the Czechoslovakian tank brigade began on 24th March 1945 by the town of Zhory, and on 15th April 1945 they commenced attack on the territory of their homeland, in the direction of Rohov and Sudice, north of Opava. Four days later, the tank brigade continued their assault in the direction of Velká Polom, Dolní Lhota and Čavisov, after which they focused on Hýlov, until, on 30th April, the last seven tanks joined in the liberation of Moravian Ostrava. Once fighting had

ceased on the territory of northern Moravia and Silesia, only 7 tanks remained of the original 65 in the brigade.

Following the liberation of Ostrava the brigade continued in the direction of Fulnek and Olomouc, taking part in its final action by Litovel on 8th May.

The artefacts presented in the display cabinet give an overview of equipment and weapons used by Soviet and Czechoslovakian soldiers who fought in the Ostrava-Opava Offensive, as do other items displayed across the scene as a whole.



Members of the Czechoslovak 1st Mixed Air Division in Przemysłu, 1st February 1945



Tank no. 051 (typ T34/85), which on 30 April 1945 was the first to cross the Ostravice river into Silesian Ostrava



Czechoslovak tanks at a military parade, 10th May 1945



Czechoslovak tank operators at Albertovec, location of a repair facility for heavy-duty hardware



Commander of the Czechoslovak 1st Independent Tank Brigade Lt.-Col. Vladimír Janko at the military parade in Ostrava

The liberation of Czechoslovakia (Cabinets 4 and 5)



Parade of units belonging to the Czechoslovak 1st Army Corps in Bratislava following the city's liberation

The Slovakia campaign and Bratislava-Brno Offensive

The objective of the Bratislava-Brno Offensive was south Moravia, i.e. to liberate the city of Brno and advance to the towns of Vyškov, Prostějov and Olomouc. At the same time, the 4th Ukrainian Front was to advance towards Olomouc from the north, thereby surrounding the German army in Moravia and Slovakia. The offensive was entrusted to the 2nd Ukrainian Front, led by Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, and was begun on 25th March 1945 by an assault in the direction of Nové Zámky, Malacky and Brno. The Soviet army, with 350,000 infantry, nearly 7,900 pieces of artillery and mortars, around 300 tanks and over 600 aircraft, outnumbered the German forces. The Red Army was joined in its advance on south Moravia by 86,000-strong units belonging to the Royal Romanian Army. The German side had at its disposal 250,000 men, over 2,000 pieces of artillery and mortars, 120 tanks and around 150 aircraft. The most important point of the German defence system was the Lesser Carpathi-

ans region. Bratislava was declared a fortress in December 1944, meaning that important buildings were mined and connected to a unified detonation system – however, the local inhabitants were able to sabotage the system and Bratislava was liberated on 4th April.

5th April 1945 saw the start of the battle for south Moravia – first Lanžhot, then Hodonín. On 15th April 1945 an order was issued to German units to abandon the fortress of Brno and take position outside the city in order to defend it. Starting on 18th April 1945, the most intense phase of fighting took place for control of the village of Ořechov, an important strategic point on the road to Brno. After a week of fighting, Ořechov was taken, opening up the road to Brno, which was liberated on 26th April 1945.

18th April 1945 was the day on which American forces also entered Czechoslovakian territory, from the west, by the village of Hranice near Aš. Their advance was, however, halted on 6th May at a previously agreed demarcation line running from Karlovy Vary to České Budějovice via Plzeň – any further advance was forbid-

den by the Soviet command. The capital city, Prague, was liberated on 9th May during the Prague Uprising.

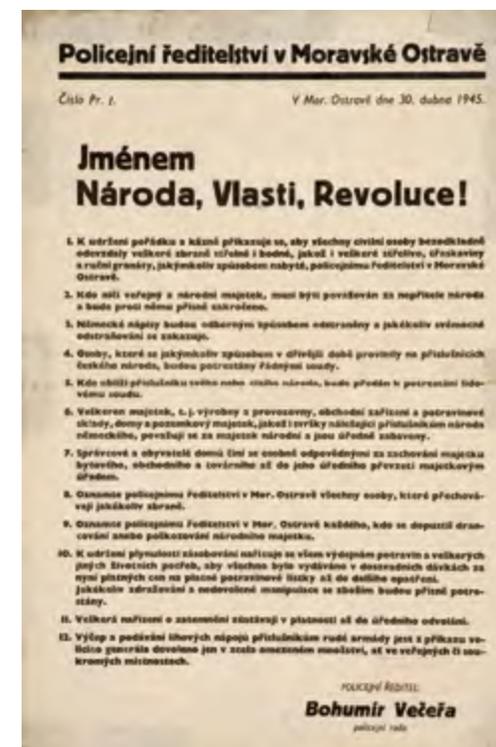
Following agreement with the government-in-exile in London, preparations for a national uprising had been underway since the start of 1945. The first instances of unrest occurred at various locations in the Protectorate starting on 1st May (Přerov), after which the people then rose up against the German occupiers in hundreds more towns and communities; Czechoslovakian flags were flown and German signs torn down. Prague became the centre of the uprising on 5th May, when the Czech National Council declared the end of the Protectorate and its own assumption of power. The uprising was triggered by an announcement made on Prague radio, after which thousands of Prague citizens helped build and defend barricades against the German forces. The Prague insurgents were joined in their fight by the so-called Russian Liberation Army of Gen. Vlasov. Units of the 1st Ukrainian Front entered Prague early on the morning of 9th May. The liberation was completed following some skirmishes with SS units that refused to leave the city.



Display cabinets 4 and 5



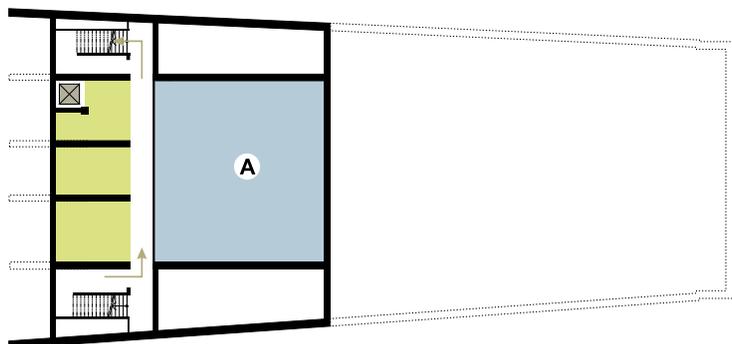
Lower Square in Opava, destroyed during the fight to liberate the city



Decree of the Police Directorate in Ostrava to maintain order, issued on the day of the city's liberation



Honorary cemetery for fallen Soviet soldiers in front of the New Town Hall in Ostrava



1st floor

A – Memorial Hall

Everyday life in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia



Arrival of German units in Ostrava on 15th March 1939

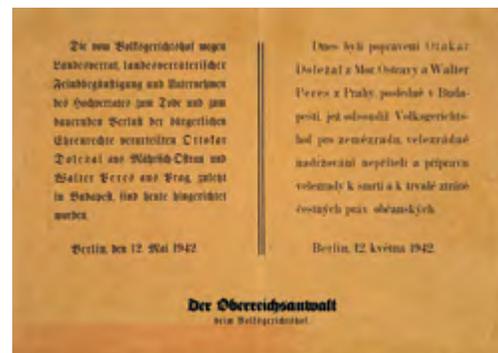
One day after the occupation of Czechoslovakia on 15th March 1939, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was declared. The so-called forced administration of businesses was introduced with immediate effect. 1st October 1939 saw the introduction of coupons for food, and in December for clothes and shoes. The army, political parties and police force were all abolished and the gendarmerie was brought under full German control, with the main instrument of repression being the German secret police (Gestapo). All institutions of further education were closed and the number of students in secondary education was gradually reduced.

Starting in the middle of 1939, Czechs were recruited for labour in Germany, and Labour Offices and

work registers were gradually introduced. Starting in 1942, Czech citizens were taken to Germany to perform forced labour, where people from the occupied countries replaced Germans who had been called to the front.

Shortly after the occupation, preparations began for the 'final solution to the Czech question' – a plan for the Germanisation of Czech territory and the deportation of the Czech populace to Siberia. According to the plan, 45% of the populace was to be Germanised, 40% deported and the rest exterminated.

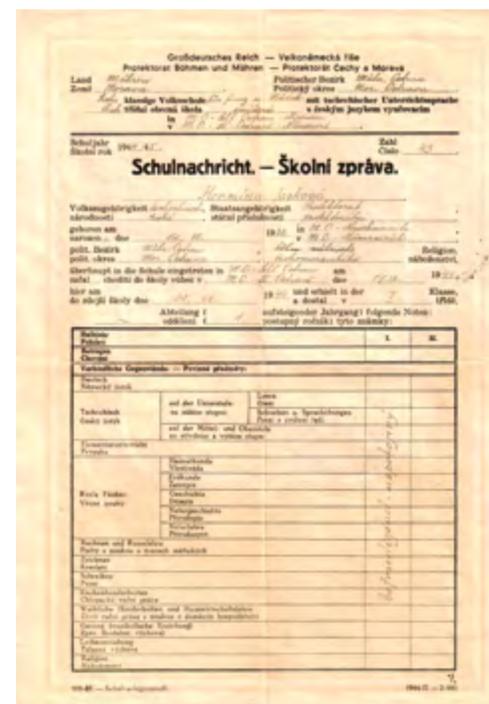
The items on display – household goods, toys, domestic fittings – illustrate everyday life in the period from 1939-45.



Announcement of the executions of Protectorate citizens



View of Exhibition



Certificate issued during the Protectorate



Assessment of Protectorate citizen for work in Germany



Occupation of the Vitkovice steelworks immediately after the German occupation of Ostrava

The assassination of Reinhard Heydrich



View of Exhibition

In September 1941 SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich was appointed Acting Reich Protector. Immediately after taking office, he introduced martial law and had lists drawn up of people intended for execution.

The Czechoslovak government-in-exile decided to organise an operation to kill Heydrich. A total of four teams of parachutists were dropped over the Protectorate with the intention of carrying out the assassination. The Anthropoid team was entrusted with carrying out the assassination itself.

The chosen location for the assassination was a bend in V Holešovičkách street, along the route taken by Heydrich when travelling from his residence in Panské Břežany to the centre of Prague. On 27th May 1942, the parachutists Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš carried out the attack on the *Reichsprotektor*. When Heydrich's vehicle braked at the bend, Gabčík ran across its path and aimed his machine-gun, which, however, jammed and failed to fire. Kubiš then threw a grenade at the car, which exploded, seriously injuring Heydrich.

A state of emergency was declared that same day. Immediately after Reinhard Heydrich died of his wounds on 4th June, a reign of terror was unleashed on the Czech populace. According to a decree issued by Hitler, any person who had aided the assassins, or known about

them and failed to report them, was to be shot together with their family.

The men involved in the assassination hid themselves in the Church of Sts. Cyril and Methodius on Resslova street in Prague. On the morning of 18th June, the church was surrounded by members of the SS, who had found out about the hideaway based on information provided by Karel Čurda. Three of the parachutists died in the ensuing battle and four committed suicide.

As an act of revenge on the part of the German authorities, the village of Lidice was razed to the ground on 10th June 1942. Two weeks later, the settlement of Ležáky was also wiped out.



Jan Kubiš



Jozef Gabčík



Title page of the *České slovo* periodical from 5th June 1942 carrying news of the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich



Mauthausen concentration camp, where over 250 people who had aided the parachutists Gabčík and Kubiš in any way were executed



Executed men in the garden of the Horák farm in Lidice



Decree of the declaration of the state of emergency

The Holocaust and concentration camps



View of Exhibition

The items on display, taken from the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps, illustrate the most tragic event of the period from 1939-45 – the persecution of civilians and the Holocaust. A holocaust, in the wider sense, is understood as the systematic extermination of an ethnic, religious or political grouping. The Holocaust affected primarily the Jews and other groups of people labelled 'racially inferior' during the time of the Second World War: the Romani, homosexuals, opponents of the regime etc.

Following the declaration of the Protectorate, the German authorities tried to force the Jewish population to emigrate (20,000 Jews had taken this step by the end of 1939). The 'final solution to the Jewish question' was intended to completely exterminate the Jewish population in the whole of Europe (around 11 million people), and the deportation of Jews to concentration camps was initiated in the autumn of 1941.

Jews from the Protectorate were concentrated in the Theresienstadt camp, whence almost 90,000 people were dispatched to extermination camps between the years 1942-44, with the most frequent destination being

Auschwitz, where around 1.5 million people perished in the course of the war.

The Buchenwald concentration camp had over 100 sub-camps and work centres. Over 240,000 passed through its gates, 56,000 of whom perished. The numbers of victims of concentration camps are only approximate, as it is not possible to determine exact numbers.



Transport of Jewish civilians from the Protectorate to Auschwitz



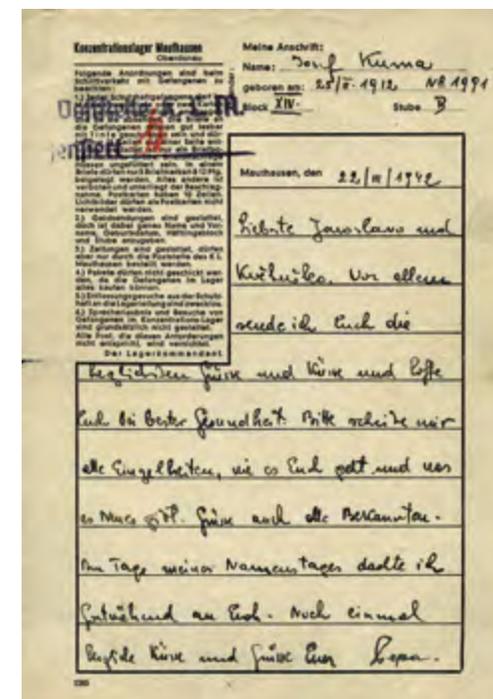
Label worn by inmate of the Auschwitz concentration camp – red triangle with the letter T



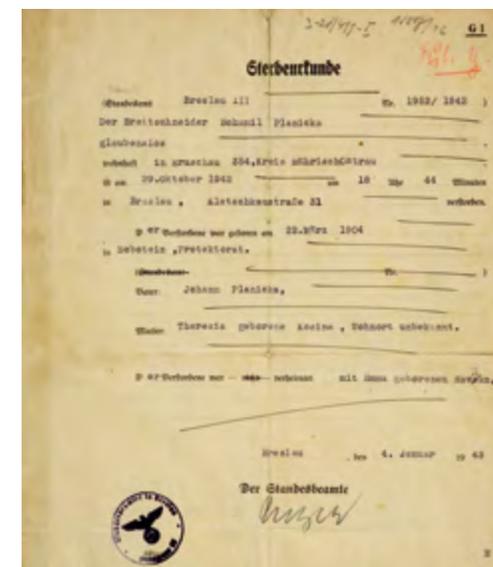
Confirmation that the named person was a prisoner at a concentration camp



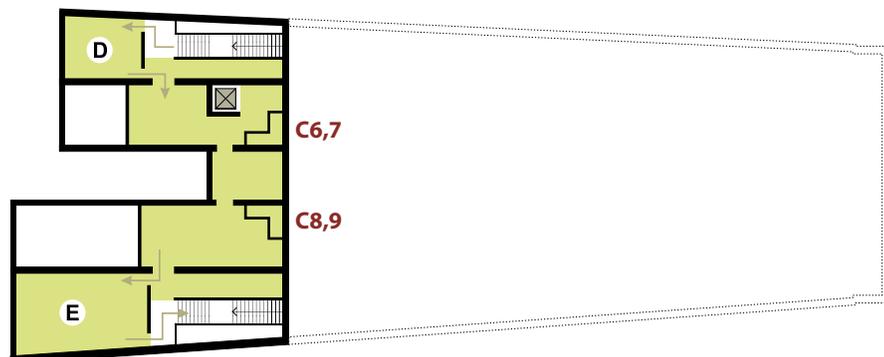
Pupils at a Jewish school in Ostrava. Not a single child survived the war



Letter of concentration camp inmate to his wife



Notification of the death of a prisoner to their family



2nd floor

D – Mauthausen
E – Air-raid on Ostrava

Mauthausen

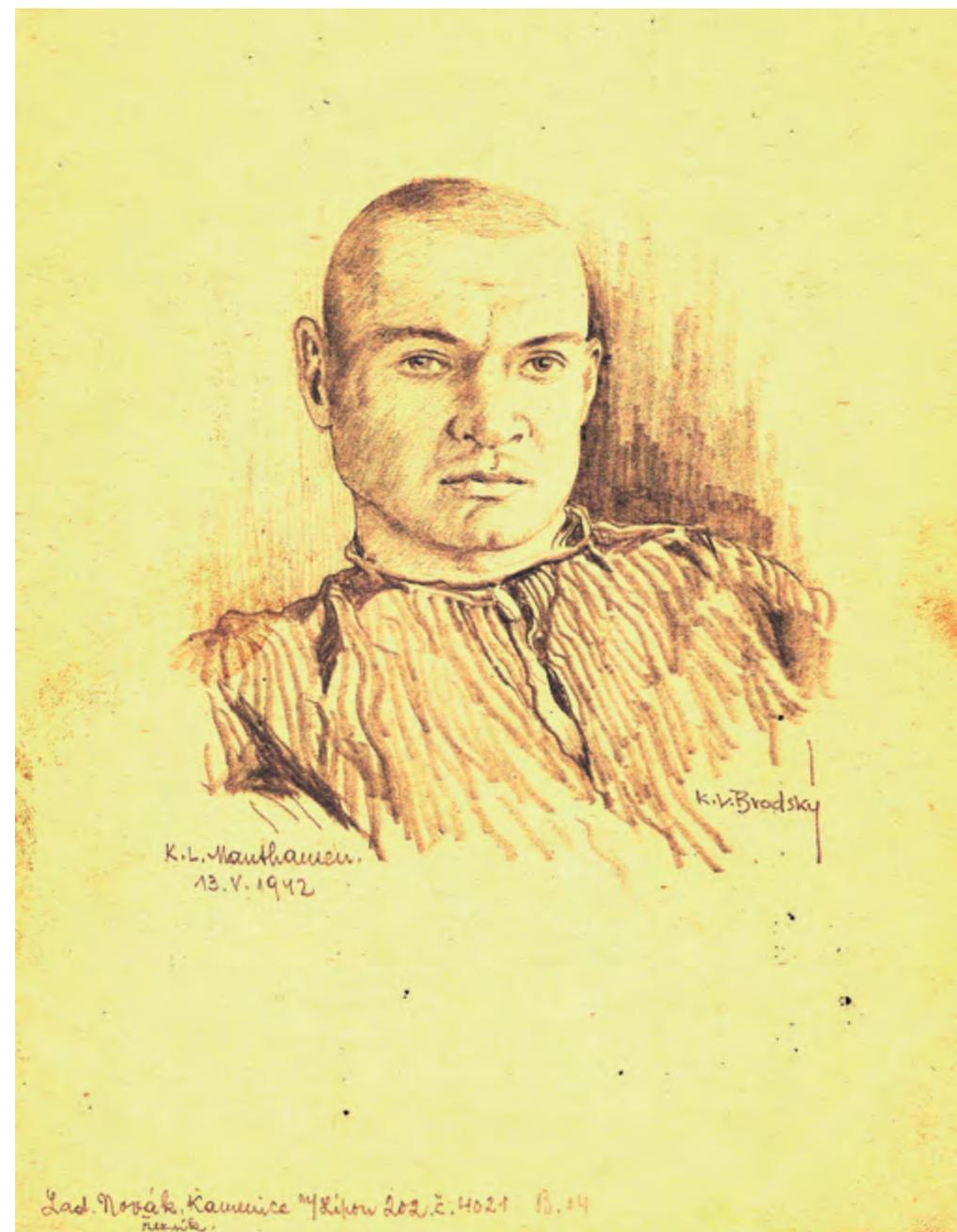


The 'Stairs of Death' diorama

The Mauthausen concentration camp was established in August 1938, not far from the city of Linz in Austria. Even though it was never completed, it was nevertheless one of the most brutal concentration camps anywhere, and saw the practise of some of the worst methods of prisoner torture. Over 120,000 people died through hard labour, chiefly in the nearby quarry, or through execution, including a number of Czech scientists, teachers and artists.

The so-called 'Stairs of Death', where prisoners carried heavy blocks of stone up a flight of steps leading from a quarry, can also be considered an instrument of torture. Many prisoners died while performing labour, were beaten to death with pickaxes or thrown from a nearby cliff by guards.

Mauthausen here serves as a symbol of all concentration and extermination camps that operated during the Second World War.



Picture of an inmate of Mauthausen concentration camp, painted by K. Lehký-Brodský, also an inmate of the camp

Middle East (Bunker – Tobruk)



'Bunker in the Desert' diorama

November 1940 saw the establishment of a Czechoslovak Army Group in the Middle East, commanded by Lt.-Col. Karel Klapálek. In the first half of 1941, the group was deployed near the Egyptian city of Alexandria and later in defence of the airports around Marsa Matrouh in the Libyan Desert. The Czechoslovak Army Group was then deployed in Syria as part of Operation Exporter against the forces of Vichy France. Following the capitulation of the Vichy troops, the largest action in which the Czechoslovakians participated in the Middle East was the defence of Tobruk between 21st October and 10th December 1941.

The Czechoslovak Army Group was entrusted with the defence of a 5.5 kilometre-long section of the defensive perimeter and was not transferred back to Palestine until the beginning of April 1942. At the coastal camp of Bath Galim by Haifa, the battalion was reorganised on 22nd May 1942 to form the Czechoslovak 200th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment – East, which, from June 1942, rejoined the battle of Tobruk, this time as part of the defence against the offensive led by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. The regiment completed its task in June 1943, after which it was transferred to Great Britain.

CZECHOSLOVAK CONTINGENT-EAST
ČS. VOJENSKÁ JEDNOTKA VÝCHODNÍ

PASS PEST PRAPOR 11 - VÝCHODNÍ
2. FOTA

No. 14 Unit: CZECHOSLOVAK INF. BATT. 11 - EAST
Běž.čís. Jednotka: 4th Company

Army No. Z 985 Rank He Name Křístek Josef
Arm.čís. Hodnost Jméno

has permission to be absent from his quarters / duty *
má povolení vzdálit se ze své posádky / služby *

from 14 hrs on 30 September 43 hrs on 1 October
od hod.dne do hod.dne

for the purpose of proceeding to Aleppo PRAPOR 11 - VÝCHODNÍ
aby mohl cestovat do

Station Azar Date 30/9/43 O.C. kapl. Dvořák
Místo Dne Velitel

* Delete whichever is not applicable — Nebodící se škrtněte.

Všechny voj. osoby, které dostanou povolení opustit tábor, musí u své setniny zanechat přesnou adresu, na kterou je lze telefonicky či telegraficky zavolat k návratu. (Den. rozk. V.S.č. 4./7.1.1941-3). Na tento, nebo na jiný rozkaz, musí se ihned vrátit k jednotce.

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Pass belonging to a member of Czechoslovak Battalion 11 – East



Czechoslovakian soldiers in Tobruk, Africa, 1942

The Czechoslovak infantry on the Western Front (Cabinets 6 and 7)



View of Exhibition

After the outbreak of war, Czechoslovakians who had, by a variety of routes, reached France, gathered in the town of Agde. Despite a lack of arms and equipment, on 29th September 1939 a Czechoslovak infantry division was formed which, despite reaching a strength of 10,200 men by May 1940, still did not have the requisite arms and equipment, and only completed training at the start of June.

Due to developments at the front, however, the division was quickly deployed to fight on the rivers Seine and Loire. Around 400 Czechoslovakian soldiers were killed or captured in the course of these actions, with many being taken prisoner by the Germans and several hundred missing in action. 20th June 1940 signalled the effective end of this unit's campaign on the French front.

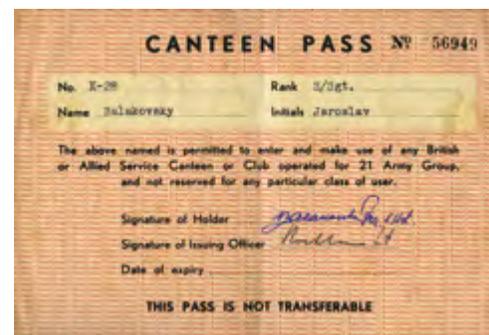
After the fall of France, 4,000 soldiers and over 500 civilians were evacuated to Great Britain, where on 12th August 1940 the Czechoslovak 1st Mixed Brigade (later reorganised as the Czechoslovak Independent Brigade) was formed. The Czechoslovakians were entrusted with the defence of the southern coast of the British Isles. Following the arrival of troops from the Middle East, the Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade was established on 1st September 1943. After the Nor-



Karel Klapálek, commander of Czechoslovak infantry units in the Middle East

mandy landings, it was decided in August 1944 that the Czechoslovak brigade, too, would be deployed to fight in France, where it relieved Canadian and British units at the port of Dunkirk on 5th October 1944, with the objective of forcing German forces in the area to capitulate.

The items contained in the display cabinets belonged to members of the Czechoslovak infantry units that fought on the side of the Allies in France and Great Britain.



Mess passy



Unveiling of foundation stone for the establishment of Czechoslovak units in Great Britain in 1940



Evacuation of Czechoslovak soldiers from France, June 1940



ID document of a member of the Czechoslovak unit in France



Czechoslovakia fights for Victory! poster

Resistance during the Protectorate (The linking-bridge)



Partisan with transmitter key

The most significant organisations involved in the home resistance movement after the creation of the Protectorate were Defence of the Nation, made up of former officers and soldiers of the Czechoslovak Army, the Political Centre and the 'We Remain Faithful' Petition Committee. In the spring of 1940 these organisations were merged into the Central Leadership of the Home Resistance.

Starting in 1941, the provision of information from abroad was organised on the territory of the Protectorate. Several missions were sent from the USSR, which were, however, eliminated by the Gestapo. Further missions were organised by the central leadership in London – these were Silver A, Silver B, Anthropoid, Out Distance, Zinc, Bivouac, Steel, Intransitive and Tin. The missions of these groups varied – sabotage, intelligence, and in the case of Anthropoid, the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. Partisan groups within the Protectorate started coming into being from 1942 and operated chiefly in mountainous regions. Repressive measures taken following the death of Reinhard Heydrich crippled

the home resistance movement and resistance activities did not develop further until 1944, when parachute missions, codenamed Calcium, Barium, Spelter, Clay and so on, were again sent from Great Britain; groups were also sent from the USSR. The most well-known partisan groups were Jan Kozina, Jan Žižka and the Jan Hus Brigade.

The Council of Three, led by Gen. Vojtěch Luža, attempted to unite the home resistance and, from 1944, made preparations for a partisan struggle, intended to grow into an uprising as the front drew closer. Generally, the most important task of the parachute groups was to make contact with resistance groups and pass on messages from the intelligence centre in London, as well as sabotage and partisan activities.

Partisan activity also developed in mountainous regions of Moravia, especially from 1944 onwards, when the Czechoslovak 1st Jan Žižka Partisan Brigade arrived from Slovakia (the Brigade, then still a commando unit, arrived in September and October 1944).



ID of a member of the Jan Žižka partisan brigade



Photograph of the Wolfram group with partisan commander Nishchimenko, 1945



Hájenska in the Beskydy, one of the bases of the partisans



Col. Jánko Ušiak, commander of the Czechoslovak 1st Partisan Brigade



Partisans with commander Dayan Bajanovich Murzin

Czechoslovak air force on the Western Front (Cabinets 8 and 9)



"Dormitories at an airfield in Great Britain"

Following their arrival from Poland and the resolution of essential formalities, the Czechoslovak pilots were sent to join units of the Foreign Legion in North Africa. Once France entered the war on 3rd September 1939, they were released of their obligations so that they could join the Czechoslovak military units being formed on the territory of France, and were active e.g. at the training camps in Chartres, Toulouse, Avord, Pau and Tours. In the spring of 1940, 30 bombers and 110 fighter planes fought on the French front, representing a quarter of the total number of pilots in French fighter pilot units.

Following the French surrender, the Czechoslovak pilots were evacuated to Great Britain, where they became part of the British RAF (Royal Air Force) as squadrons nos. 310, 312 and 313 (Czechoslovak fighter squadron) and 311 (Czechoslovak bomber squadron). A flight of Czechoslovak pilots also served with the no. 68 night squadron.

In May 1942, a fighting wing was formed out of the three Czechoslovak fighting squadrons. This wing took part in fighting during the invasion of Normandy. Until the end of the war, pilots from the Czechoslovak fighter squadrons primarily accompanied bomber planes on missions over occupied territories and Germany. The members of the Czechoslovak squadrons returned to their homeland in August 1945.

The diorama of the pilots' dorms is based on period photographs. These were built on airfields as a rest area for pilots, whose units would change bases several times during the war, being transferred to a variety of airfields across Britain.



ID document of Alois Hlobil, member of the Czechoslovak airborne unit in France



Czechoslovak pilots in French airforce uniforms



RAF pilots' life jacket



Astrocompass used by the navigators of British bomber planes



AVM (Air Vice Marshal) Karel Janoušek, commander of Czechoslovak air force in Great Britain



Visit of President Edvard Beneš to a base of Czechoslovak pilots in Great Britain

The bombing of towns

From 1944 until the end of the war, the Allied forces carried out air raids on strategic targets on the territory of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The chief targets were airfields, industrial centres and roads. Air raids damaged a number of towns and resulted in several thousand deaths. Air raids represented a nightmare for civilians, and this psychological effect, the spreading of

terror, was one of the anticipated results of the actions. The situation is illustrated in the diorama contained in the exhibition.

Ostrava was bombed by the 15th Air Army on 29th August 1944. The raid lasted 20 minutes, during which 123 houses were destroyed, 1,475 damaged and over 400 lives were lost.



Diorama the bombing of Ostrava



Ostrava following the air raid of 29th August 1945

Persecution in the Czechoslovak Army after February 1948

Immediately after returning to their liberated homeland, a number of Czechoslovak officers who had participated in resistance in the West during the Second World War came under the scrutiny of the Defensive Intelligence (*Obranné zpravodajství* (OBZ)) agency, which had been set up in accordance with an order issued by the commander of the 1st Army Corps in the USSR, Gen. Ludvík Svoboda, on 7th January 1945. In April 1945, the Central Administration of the OBZ was set up, with Cpt. Bedřich Reicin at its head and chaired by Lt.-Col. Dr. Karel Vaš. The OBZ was under the complete control of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Russian NKVD (members of which had been active in Czechoslovak units in the USSR for the entire duration of its existence). OBZ was tasked with the external and internal protection of the army, including the search for traitors and collaborators, as well as the vetting of army members to find whether they had been working to further interests of foreign countries.

This task also covered the monitoring of officers who had been active in England during the War, those who had gone to the Soviet Union during the war, and even those who had been there for its entire duration. Thus, for example, the commander of the Czechoslovak air force in Great Britain, Gen. Karel Janoušek, the commander of the Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade, Gen. Alois Liška and the head of the Czechoslovak Military Mission in the USSR, Gen. Heliodor Píka, all of whom were monitored and interrogated, with 'evidence' being gathered of their subversive activities.

Even though OBZ was disbanded by decree of the Chief of the General Staff, Gen. Bohumil Boček, as of 1st April 1946, it continued its activities uninterrupted as the 5th Division of Army Headquarters and the headquarters of individual commands. The attention of the 5th Department now took a more complex view of the chiefs of staff of the army of Czechoslovakia, which was largely composed of officers who had been active in Great Britain during the War; these were then removed from their commands, starting in autumn 1947, when a reorganisation of the Army took place. The Communists thus attempted to gain control of the Army in order to ensure that it would not get involved in political struggles. In this, it succeeded.

Immediately after the Communist coup in February 1948, the first wave of dismissals from Army ranks took place, affecting hundreds of soldiers. Further waves followed in the years 1949 and 1950. Soldiers were ejected from their quarters and lost their jobs, while being

informed that henceforth they were permitted to work only in working-class professions. Officers who had occupied important positions in the army were arrested and subjected to show trials, at the end of which they were sentenced either to long terms of imprisonment or even death, as happened to Heliodor Píka. Others were interned in forced-labour camps or subjected to brutal interrogations methods and torture. Thus Gen. Karel Lukas, military attaché in Canada of the London-based government-in-exile, perished on 19th May 1949 in Pankrác prison following brutal torture. The most intensive wave of persecution took place between 1949-56 and affected thousands of Czechoslovak soldiers who had departed to fight for the liberation of their homeland during the Second World War.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the situation calmed, and in 1960 a number of imprisoned soldiers were released by presidential amnesty. During the 1960s, many soldiers were rehabilitated; however, many were not fully rehabilitated until after 1989.



General Heliodor Píka, victim of judicial murder



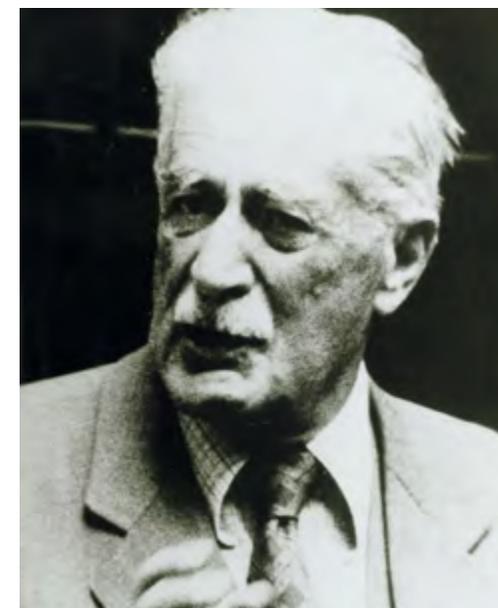
General Karel Lukas, friend of Heliodor Píka, who died following brutal torture



Even Gen. Píka's son, Milan, was the victim of persecution, being accused of an attempt to break his father out of prison. Milan was himself imprisoned and, when released, was forced to abandon his studies and forbidden from living in Prague



Bedřich Reicin during his time as a member of the Czechoslovak unit in the USSR, which was one of the chief organisers of the persecution of thousands of Czechoslovak soldiers



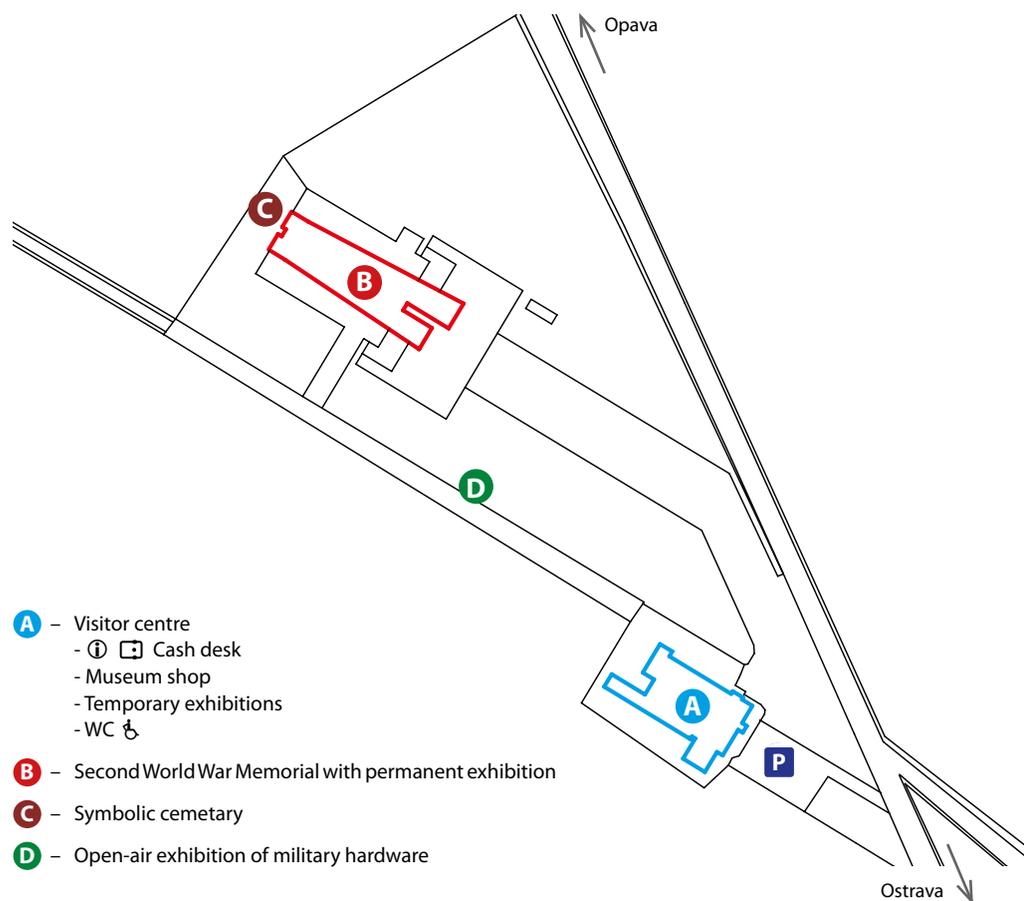
Dr. Rastislav Váhala, who bravely defended Heliodor Píka in both trials (in 1949 and 1968)

Outdoor premises

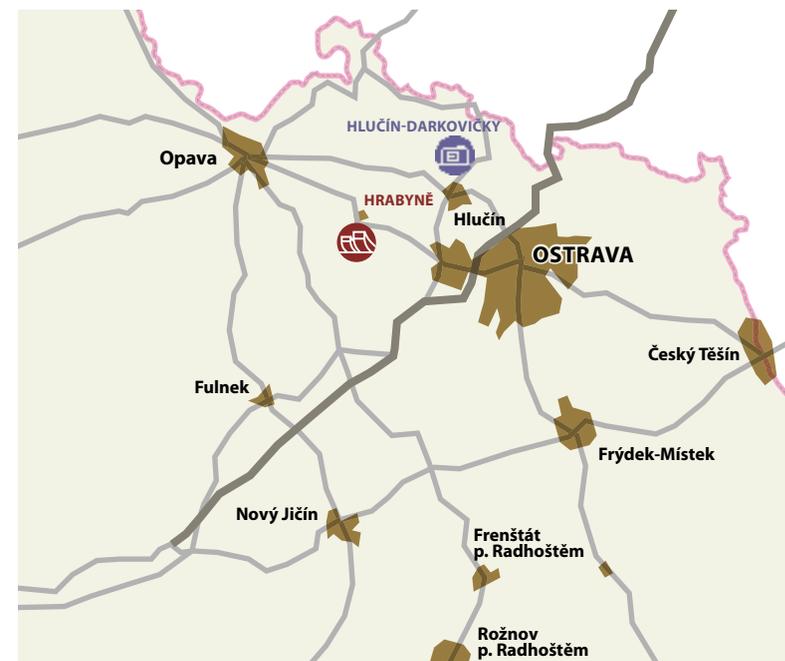
Outside the Memorial is located a symbolic cemetery with the names of 13,000 of those who died during the Second World War. Over 7,000 names belong to members of the 4th Ukrainian Front who fell in the surrounding region during the fight for liberation, 5,000 belong to inhabitants of north Moravia and Silesia who fell while participating in resistance at home and abroad or died in a concentration camp. The cemetery also contains the names of nearly 1,000 members of the Czechoslovak 1st Army Group who lost their lives during fighting in Slovakia and south Moravia (in aid of the Ostrava-Opava Offensive).

There is also a memorial to the 67 American pilots shot down during the Anglo-American air raids in 1944-45, as well as to the 40 Romanian soldiers who fell as part of the 4th Ukrainian Front.

In front of the Memorial is a collection of statues, entitled *Brotherhood in Battle*, by sculptor Miloš Axman, commemorating the alliance between the Soviet and Czechoslovak units during the Ostrava-Opava Offensive. The Memorial is approached from the car park through a lime-tree alley. This alley used to lead to the Hrabyně Chateau, which sustained heavy damage during the war and had to be demolished in 1946.



Fifteen kilometres to the southwest of Hrabyně are further exhibition premises of the Silesian Museum focusing on military history – the Hlučín-Darkovičky Czechoslovak Fortification Complex.

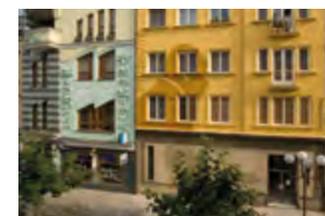


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Visit other exhibition buildings and premises of the Silesian Museum

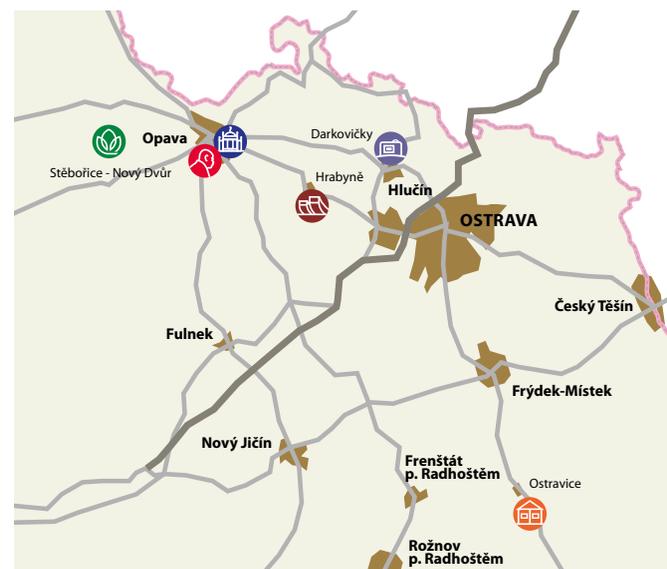
The Nový Dvůr Arboretum
Stěbořice



The Petr Bezruč Memorial
Opava



The Old Exhibition Building
Opava



**The Hlučín-Darkovičky
Czechoslovak Fortification
Complex**



The Petr Bezruč Chalet
Ostravice

The Silesian Museum can be seen as a gate to Silesia, with a scope extending from both animate and inanimate aspects of nature via prehistory and history to art history, primarily on the territory of Czech Silesia, as well as north and northwest Moravia. The Silesian Museum is a contributory organisation of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. With a history stretching back to 1814, it is the oldest public museum on the territory of the current Czech Republic. The museum's 2,400,000 exhibits mean that it is, at the same time, the third biggest in the country.

The museum currently administers six buildings and premises: apart from the Old Exhibition Building in the centre of Opava, these are the Nový Dvůr Arboretum in Stěbořice, the Second World War Memorial in Hrabyně, the Petr Bezruč Memorial in Ostrožná street in Opava, the Hlučín-Darkovičky Czechoslovak Fortification Complex and the Petr Bezruč Chalet in Ostravice. The museum is

home to specialists from the fields of mineralogy, geology, palaeontology, botany, dendrology, entomology, zoology, museology, archaeology, ethnography, numismatics, history and art history, including the history of photography, music, literature and theatre, as well as military history, and restoration experts, museologists and librarians.

Every year the Silesian Museum organises around 30 exhibitions, with special attention being devoted to the history of and nature in Silesia and the Second World War. The museum is a research organisation involved in basic and applied research. The results of research are published in, amongst others, the peer-reviewed *Časopis Slezského zemského muzea* (Silesian Museum Journal), which is published in two editions – edition A for the natural sciences, and edition B for the historical sciences – and the *Slezský sborník* (Silesian Gazette), likewise peer-reviewed.

Guide

Guide to the Second World War Memorial of the Silesian Museum

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