Chapter 3

The Czech Lands

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When Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia, there were already local officials in place at every level of administration who could be charged with enforcing the dictates of the new government. The intricate administrative system of the Czech lands was thus taken over completely. The Germans did not have to spread their men across every farm and factory in the country to see that requisitions were met. The Czech officials, schooled in following orders, did it for them, unhappily but diligently. As a result, a relatively small number of German officials and soldiers were able to impose a harsh regime on a civilized and democratic country, putting out Czech resistance almost as soon as it appeared. Even as they lost the war, the Germans tyrannized the Czech population by using the well-organized bureaucracy already in place before the occupation.

These Czech bureaucrats were not collaborators, except in the sense that, after the occupation, everyone who worked, worked for the Germans and was therefore helping them. There were more Germans than ever in the country by the end of the war, as the Czech *Festung* became the last refuge of German soldiers and settlers retreating into the region. The overwhelming majority of Czech officials, from the district inspector checking identity cards to the Czech jailers, were hostile to the Nazis. But the Czechs took their occupational duties seriously. The men at the highest levels in particular were dedicated to fulfilling their public service obligations, above the political fray. To the Czech bureaucrat, service to the state was a duty, irrespective of any political regime, a duty to be performed sometimes reluctantly, but always reliably.

Resistance existed, nonetheless, in scattered pockets throughout the long years of occupation. The pattern for resistance movements in Bohemia, France and elsewhere was to begin with civil disobedience – demonstrations, protests, strikes, boycotts and other forms of passive resistance – then to focus on gathering intelligence, abetted by the governments-in-exile. Only toward the war's end did these resisters move to paramilitary action and partisan warfare.[1] Except for one dramatic act of resistance directed and executed from abroad, Czech resistance until 1944 consisted mainly of gathering intelligence. When the end was finally in sight, when the Germans were in retreat, the notion of an organized uprising again took shape among the resisters; but before the underground leaders could carry it out, the rage of the population all over the country broke out in fierce, futile, unarmed attacks against the departing occupiers. The Germans, their weapons still intact, were able to crush the climactic popular revolts just as they had stamped out the brush fires of resistance throughout the occupation. From the beginning to the end of the war, active resistance in

Czechoslovakia was thus sporadic and largely ineffectual. But covert hostility toward the occupiers was consistently intense.

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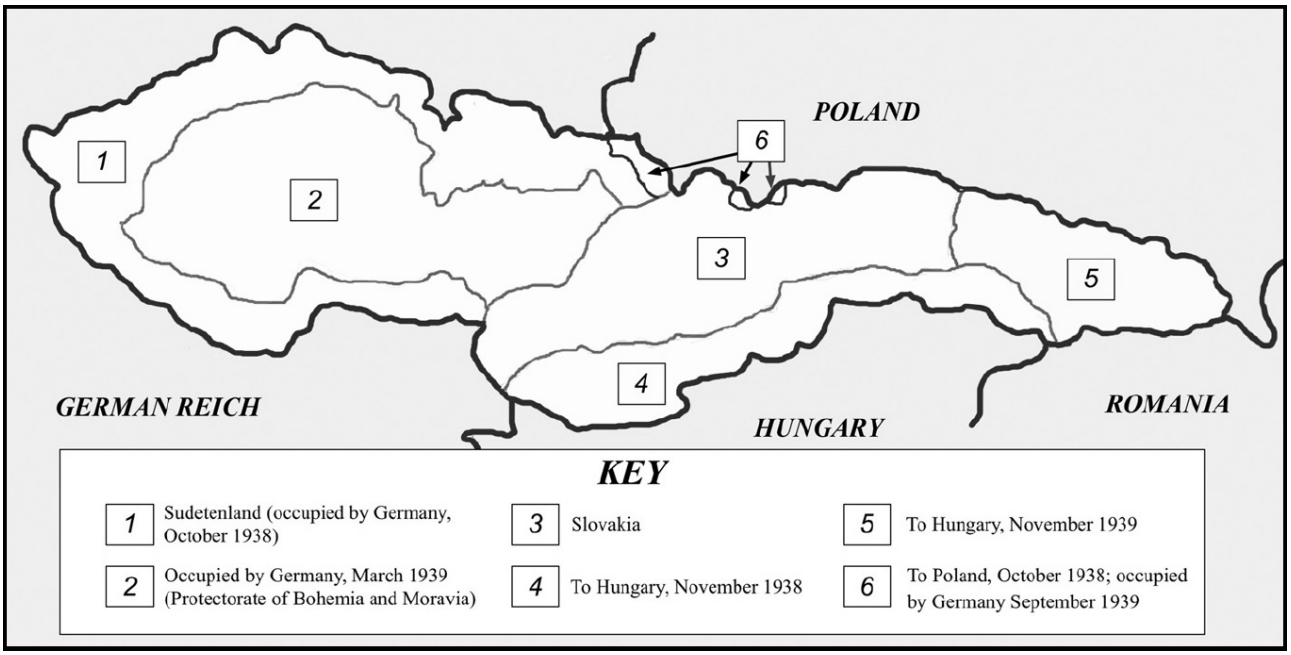
Czechs did not need Hitler's invasion to make them dislike Germans; Czech- German enmity was centuries old. As an unwilling part of the Austrian Empire, the Czechs were a subject people held in contempt by the German-speaking ruling class. During the First World War, many conscripted Czechs deserted the Austro-Hungarian Army and formed their own army. The Czechoslovak Legion developed into a huge volunteer force of perhaps 100,000 that fought with the Entente in the hope that Austria's defeat would bring about national independence for Czechs. Their wish was granted by the peacemakers in 1918 when the independent Czechoslovak Republic was carved out of the defeated and dismembered Austrian Empire. Many of the legionnaires joined the new Czechoslovak army, and virtually all maintained an old-boy network that would become a resistance nexus when Hitler came to power.

Czechoslovakia emerged from the First World War a first–class economic power, having inherited 70 per cent of the industrial production of the vast Austro–Hungarian Empire. The country retained its historic natural barrier against Germany, the Sudeten Mountains, and with it the Sudeten Germans – some 3 million Bohemians and Moravians scattered on the country's border rim. These descendants of Germans were traditionally pro-Austrian. But with the rise of Hitler, the great majority identified with the newly powerful Reich. They were German in their hearts and tongues, though their eyes may never have seen the Fatherland. Their relationship with the Czechs had until this point been that of master and servant. They generally considered all Slavs inferior to all Germans, and hated living under a new government of their former servants.

The Great Depression of the 1930s was harder on the German-speaking minority in the country than on the Czechs, and caused a huge surge of resentment against the Republic.[2] By the time Hitler occupied the Rhineland in 1936, it was obvious that he intended to shatter the Treaty of Versailles. The Sudeten Germans, as well as German speakers outside the mountain area, were not entirely homogeneous, being somewhat diverse in religion and comprising, moreover, a handful of Social Democrats, Communists and anti-fascists. But the vast majority of German-speakers supported Hitler and willingly absorbed his propaganda. They were pleased to hear that they were part of a closed community of Germans who did not need to recognize national frontiers or citizenship. With Hitler's invasion of Austria in 1938, Germany completely surrounded the historic provinces of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia and controlled Czechoslovakia's north–south trade lines. Hitler was by then as popular in the Germanspeaking areas of Bohemia and Moravia as he was in Germany. He was sending regular financial subsidies to the Sudeten proto-Nazis and fomented demonstrations in which thousands of them demanded incorporation into the Reich. In vitriolic speeches Hitler screamed that he would no longer tolerate Czechoslovakia's 'oppression' of its German-speaking minority. In the wake of one such violent speech on 12 September 1938, the followers of Konrad Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten German Party, staged demonstrations in which his followers poured into Bohemian towns, shooting policemen, breaking up Jewish shops and trying to seize public buildings. Britain and France, frantic to prevent a situation that would draw them into war with Hitler, urged the Czechoslovaks to accede to every German demand.



The dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, 1938–9.

This was the famous Munich crisis, in which Hitler threatened to attack Czechoslovakia unless it surrendered the Sudeten territories to Germany, a demand that Britain and France pressured President Edvard Beneš to accept, finally presenting it to him as an ultimatum on 21 September 1938. The Germans had five armies massed on the frontier, prepared to attack Czechoslovakia. On 23 September, the Prague government decreed general mobilization and the sleeping streets throughout the country were suddenly alive with thousands of conscripts hurrying to their regiments. The entire army, 40 divisions and 1 million men, was moved into place, ready if necessary to face Hitler alone, without allies. The senior military staff was passionately opposed to giving in. The chief officers of the army went to Prague and demanded that Beneš reject capitulation. 'They entreated, threatened, begged, some wept,' according to Beneš' own account.[3] If ever there was a country angry enough for war, it was Czechoslovakia in September 1938. As soon as people heard about the Western ultimatum, they gathered in the squares, and the numbers swelled into massive demonstrations of tens of thousands demanding war. 'Give us weapons! Give us weapons,' they shouted.[4] The government left Prague on 27 September, expecting the city to be bombarded that very night.

There was to be no fight, of course. Beneš was called back to Prague a few days later to receive an ultimatum not from Germany alone, but from four powers together, France, Britain, Italy *and* Germany. They had met in Munich without him and decided that if Czechoslovakia refused to surrender the Sudeten territories, thus 'provoking' a war with Hitler, France and Britain would consider themselves absolved from their treaty commitments. The Czechoslovak army could have held out against Hitler for three months, according to the calculations of its generals, or six weeks according to cooler estimates.[5] Beneš reasoned that war would come anyway, with or without the sacrifice of millions of Czechoslovak lives. He made the agonizing decision to give in, a capitulation that haunted him for the rest of his life. He and his cabinet went into exile in Western Europe, eventually establishing a government-in-exile in London.

Germany moved unopposed into the fringe of the Bohemian lands containing mountain approaches and fortifications. The Germans came into possession of a huge endowment of war materiel and a strategic geographic advantage on both their western and eastern fronts. The eight territories in Bohemia and Moravia in which the ethnic Germans were settled were separated from each other by broad belts of land peopled by non-German speakers, so that the Sudeten areas did not

form one administrative or economic pocket. The Czechs, Slovaks, Jews and anti-Nazi Germans in the region – perhaps a million people – fled at once to what was now called the 'rump' republic, leaving their property to be confiscated by the Germans. The countries around Czechoslovakia, observing its vulnerable situation, took the opportunity to seize territory with German approval. The Poles took the Teschen district; the Hungarians took 5,000 square miles of Slovakia.

The Munich Pact that permitted this German invasion was broken in just six months when, in March 1939, Hitler marched into Bohemia and Moravia and declared the country a protectorate of the Reich, an occupation that the rump republic, deprived of its fortifications, was powerless to resist. Slovakia, with less materiel to provide to the Germans, was not occupied. It was declared independent – independent, that is, of the Czechs – and became a German satellite.[6] Czechoslovakia disappeared from the map of Europe. Emil Hácha, the elderly and fragile judge who replaced Beneš, was retained as state president in Bohemia and Moravia, the hesitant and unwilling instrument of Hitler's Reich Protector, Konstantin von Neurath.[7] Karl Hermann Frank, a leader of the Sudeten German Party, exercised disproportionate control over security matters. Frank, altogether fiercer than Neurath, was his rival for the post of Reich Protector.

The Czechs in this new Protectorate government were not ministers in the usual sense. They exercised almost no authority in political affairs, yet were constrained to carry out German orders: expropriating Czech property, harassing the Czech intelligentsia and Germanizing the rest of the population. Whether or not an official was a true collaborator, willingly executing the Nazi directives, was a question that was still open after the war, when many people, including the hapless President Hácha, were carelessly accused of collaboration. Hácha appointed General Alois Eliáš prime minister of the non-ministers. Respected in diplomatic circles, Eliáš was personally acquainted with Reich Protector Neurath, whom he had met abroad. They communicated with each other in French, which perhaps kept Neurath in mind of the world beyond the aberrant Reich. Eliáš was a former French legionnaire, warm, urbane, 5 feet 8 inches of cosmopolitan civility, devoted to his wife and their pet monkey. He was the highest ranking of the Czech officials carrying out German orders. He was also one of the most prominent members of the secret resistance that had already begun to take shape among former legionnaires and former officers of the now dissolved Czechoslovak army.

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In those early days, no obvious division separated the Czech nominal government – those Czechs whose every move was watched by the Nazis – from the resistance. At that time, the lines between collaboration and resistance were blurred, since the same people sometimes participated in both. The officials considered themselves a government temporarily in captivity. There was no body of active collaborators in Czechoslovakia as there was in France or Norway, no significant pro-German group except among the Sudetens. But neither was there widespread determination to oppose the regime among the general population. Certain individuals who became highly placed in the new government were indeed outand- out collaborators, such as Emanuel Moravec, the Czech 'quisling'; but they did not represent the harassed majority of Czech officials.

In the view of Eliáš and the wiser heads among the former military officers, there could be no question now of taking on the occupiers with the remnants of a disbanded and crippled army, nor of planning futile uprisings. The role of the resisters was to gather intelligence and smuggle it abroad, and to wait for a war that would at first be fought by others. The Germans could not permanently occupy Czechoslovakia; war would eventually come. Unlike many of his fellow resisters, Eliáš foresaw that it would be a long war, requiring the military forces of both the Soviet Union and the United States to defeat Hitler.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact, announced in August 1939, put Eliáš and all Czechs into collective shock. It seemed that Czechoslovakia's only remaining friend had struck a deal with its killer. Dismay would change to relief later on, in June 1941, when Hitler discarded the neutrality pact and attacked the Soviet Union.

When the German occupation began in 1939, the anger of the Czechs was directed almost as much against the appeasers as against the Germans – an impotent rage against supposed allies who had left Czechoslovakia to its fate. But as the shock of invasion wore off, the Czech public began to react. Several mass resistance organizations formed. Foremost among them was ON (Obrana Národa), Defence of the Nation, which had at its core a group of former army officers. Though they probably should have known better, these military men believed that Germany would be defeated as soon as France and Great Britain decided to take up arms; therefore, they did not set up their group on the basis of having to exist in secret for a prolonged period. They kept files, met almost publicly in such places as coffeehouses, made up lists of their members and hatched far-fetched plans for igniting a mass revolt against the occupiers.

One of the main leaders of ON, General Sergej Ingr, was himself prudent and might have disciplined his cohorts; but he was in exile after June 1939.[8] Ingr was part of a generation of intense and dedicated army officers who found themselves thrust into the middle of political crises. Ingr escaped just before the Gestapo uncovered ON. Practically all of its members were arrested and eventually executed. ON had been the largest resistance group in Europe, yet in a matter of months in 1939 it was shattered by the Germans. As one member was arrested and tortured, he implicated another, until nearly all of the members of the organization had been tracked down. General Zdeněk Novák remained above ground, working as a brewing executive, and secretly tried to rebuild ON. The organization was never entirely wiped out, but kept reappearing as the few individuals left after each Nazi strike regrouped. Despite the German efforts to be thorough, every series of arrests left at least one former member free; that individual in time recruited others.

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The war that the Czechoslovaks were praying for finally broke out in September 1939, when the Allies responded to Hitler's invasion of Poland. The Czech public now gathered in large demonstrations that were ostensibly patriotic or religious commemorations. Some of these rallies were spontaneous, others were planned by newly forming resistance organizations. Often the crowds numbered 100,000.[9] Besides boycotting the propagandist Protectorate press, Czechs succeeded in acquiring smuggled transmitters. The underground sent thousands of cables to London, providing the Allies with information about troop and supply movements, war production and all sorts of vital intelligence that could only be uncovered by people inside the country.

There was no single centre of the resistance, then or later. Underground groups sprang up here and there through the cracks in the Nazi system. Like ON, some were large organizations loosely connected to each other through individuals who were active in several groups. Some examples of these organizations were ÚVÚ, Political Centre, a centrist group; PVVZ, and their coordinating committee, UVOD.[10] The Communist Party, KSČ, stood a little apart from the others, taking its orders from Moscow and changing its strategy in accordance with Stalin's shifting attitude toward the Allies. All of the resistance organizations, eventually even the communists, recognized President Beneš as the country's leader and the voice of free Czechoslovakia, a voice the Czech public heard regularly and riskily over the BBC. Even the communists accepted Beneš, who was still the most respected Czech statesman in Europe. He remained, for lack of a better alternative, the best representative of the national will among those who had some rapport with Stalin. For the most part, military people continued to nurse their plans for a popular insurrection that would overthrow the

Nazis, while ordinary people, if they did anything at all, attended huge, apparently submissive, gatherings. Except for these patriotic displays, the Czechs adopted an attitude of 'Get along, don't provoke repression'.

With the outbreak of fighting, the Nazis ended even mild challenges to their authority. On 1 September 1939, simultaneously with the declaration of war by the Allies, the Germans arrested no fewer than 2,000 Czech public figures – a drastic and sobering crackdown.[11] People huddled around their radios each night as if gathering for prayer. They reinserted the device in their radios that the occupiers had required them to remove, the 'Churchill' that enabled them to hear short-wave broadcasts. For fifteen cherished and illegal minutes they listened to the BBC, which in June 1940 carried the astonishing news that France, too, had collapsed – France, which they had counted on to make all the difference.[12]

For all their plaintive brevity, these broadcasts were the breath of life to the Czechs, whether they were in hiding, listening in barns and cellars or living normally. People took frightful risks to listen to the BBC in Czech, though what they heard were the impersonal voices of men in comfortable studios, men who had only a vague notion of the sufferings of their audience. Prokop Drtina, secretary to President Beneš and one of the leaders of the Political Centre when he left for London in 1939, became one of the most popular of all Czech commentators on the BBC, using the name Pavel Svatý.[13]

While Hitler sought a reckoning, or at least an advantageous peace, with Britain, the Gestapo was sweeping through various organizations in the Protectorate. It attacked Sokol, a gymnastic organization with overtones of patriotism, something like the Boy Scouts but more nationalistic, which had been a natural centre of underground activity. Nearly 1,000 Sokol members were arrested; within 8 months, only a few were still alive. By the second year of the war, thousands of Czech breadwinners were in Gestapo prisons and thousands of others had fled the country to avoid arrest, leaving their families without any income.

The Nazis had created something called National Solidarity, an official political movement that was to replace the old party system. It was the only legal outlet for political expression. A huge majority of the male voters joined it as a way of showing more solidarity than the Nazis had bargained for. Prime Minister Eliáš saw to it that Jaromir Appel, a Sokol member, was on the central committee. Together with a few confidants, Appel funnelled relief to the families of prisoners, either through private donations or public funds that could be secretly diverted. Appel avoided arrest until 1941 and even then survived three interrogations by the Gestapo.

Another helpful official was Jaroslav Mezník, appointed the provincial president of Moravia in 1940, with access to certain moneys.[14] Alois Šilinger, a communications expert and former Czech legionnaire, helped the resistance acquire and set up transmitters. At first there was the Sparta network of eleven transmitters which sent some 20,000 intelligence messages until it was destroyed in 1941.[15] Šilinger became the head of telephone service maintenance on the Slovakian border, where he could move freely all over the district. Being able to talk to many people without arousing the suspicions of the Germans was important; hence, the resistance tried to recruit postmen, bartenders, salesmen, butchers, bus drivers and bus mechanics, dentists, doctors – especially doctors inside the prisons – and clergymen.[16] But even as various resistance groups were forming, they were being devastated by arrests. No large body could remain secret for more than a year before its members were rounded up, one by one. Time and again, fragments of shattered organizations would regroup and attempt to rebuild, only to be smashed in a new round of repression.

On the anniversary of Czech independence on 28 October 1939, the Czech underground organized a massive anti-German demonstration. It resulted in a confrontation with the police and the

death of a student, Jan Opletal. That student's funeral the following month became the occasion for more rallies in Prague. Hitler decided he had had enough of demonstrations. He closed all Czech universities, and nine student leaders, picked at random, were shot without trial. During the temporary absence of Neurath from the country, Frank ordered the arrest of all students living in dormitories; 1,200 were deported to concentration camps.[17] Having concluded that Neurath was protecting the Czechs too much, Hitler removed him. But instead of replacing him with Frank, Hitler appointed as Acting Reich Protector the feared chief of Germany's Security Police, Reinhard Heydrich.

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With Heydrich's arrival in Prague on 27 September 1941, the occupation moved into a new, ruthless phase.[18] Heydrich declared martial law and placed the entire country under a curfew that was to last four months. Summary courts were the main instruments of the terror he now imposed. A trial in a summary court had only three possible outcomes: the defendant was either acquitted, sentenced to death or sent to a concentration camp. Between the summer of 1941 and the end of the year, 10,000 people were arrested including thousands of Czech Communists. Every resister in prison, subject to interrogation, meant much greater danger for those still free. People who found out they were wanted for questioning immediately went into hiding.[19]

Over 100 crimes now qualified as capital offences – listening to foreign broadcasts, consorting with Jews, possessing guns of any type, failing to turn in an unregistered person, speaking against the occupation. Under such tight restrictions, anyone could be found guilty of so-called resistance. Every day in the yards of dormitories that were being used as jails, Czechs with bloody faces were shot and hanged. Boxes appeared on the front pages of the newspapers giving the names of people who had been sentenced to death, some twenty a day – peasants, journalists, captains and colonels. Among them – one of the first announced by Heydrich the day after his arrival – was Prime Minister Aloys Eliáš, charged with high treason, though his death sentence was not carried out immediately.

One of the most effective controls the Germans employed was requiring everyone to register his address. To live anywhere in the Protectorate without registering at a district office or gendarmerie station was to be an enemy of the Reich. Anyone who was not wanted by the police thus had an identity card, though sometimes a way was found to get a false one for a resister. A district office distributed the identity cards. A worker might manage to smuggle out a blank one, though the officials counted the cards as they were printed and counted them again as they were handed out to the applicants. Discovering that a resister had a false card meant exposing the worker in the office who had provided it.

Living without an identity card meant being without a ration card as well, so that the family sheltering the resister had to share their meagre rations or engage in illicit black-market trading. People who harboured a fugitive were shot, together with their families. Moreover, anyone who failed to turn in an unregistered person might also be executed. It was impossible simply to live outdoors: villagers were assigned to patrol the woods. In the towns and villages, the cottages were thin-walled and close together, so that it was not easy to keep someone hidden in a bedroom or attic. Anyone who gave the smallest help to a resister became a resister, too. He would be just as dead after his captivity as if he had plotted to kill Hitler. Once someone aided a resister – allowing him to sleep for one night in his barn, for example – he could never again feel safe. If the resister were caught, he might be tortured to reveal every link in his underground survival, every bit of assistance no matter how trivial, going back months and months. One arrest generally meant death for dozens of people.

Nevertheless, after the war it turned out that some well–known individuals had helped the underground, such as Cyril Musil, a famous Czech ski racer, who hid several unregistered fugitives. Funds had been donated to the resistance by several quite prominent men.[20] Families that considered

themselves somewhat above the general community around them were sometimes the most willing to give shelter – men such as Jaroslav Kobylka, mayor of the town of Kadolec. They considered it fitting that they should do what average people would not.

Whenever the Germans encountered reverses in the war, instead of concentrating solely on the main battle, they reacted by tightening the occupation. This seemed ironic to many observers. The military front was the theatre where the German system would either live or die; the resistance could only harass the German government. Yet at crucial moments during the war, the Germans squandered their men and resources in keeping stricter control of the subject populations. Czechs could be arrested for not covering their windows sufficiently during a blackout; concealing a few scraps of leather or cloth; holding back a little something that was requisitioned. Because of Heydrich's controls, life was fraught with terror, not only for genuine resisters, but also for average Czechs who were simply trying to get along. In order to eat, many people traded on the black market – exchanging a dress for a little meat, swapping a child's toy for a few eggs. Since everybody was doing it, it seemed that one could get by with it; but it was impossible to be sure. There were continual executions of so-called black marketeers. Country people had to register their livestock and were required to deliver a certain quantity of meat, eggs and dairy products at certain times. Every farmer and villager kept some animals illegally, despite knowing that the authorities would show up now and then with the official goose or pig list and compare it to the tails they counted in the yard. If a family ate something at home that was severely rationed, they had to worry about the children making a comment at school that would arouse suspicion. Every life was scored with constant small lies, compromises and anxiety.[21]

Martial law was lifted in January 1942. From the German perspective, Heydrich's policy of controlled severity – harsh punishment for resistance, but not pushing the Czech population to the point of rebellion – was working; the country appeared to be pacified. Heydrich reorganized the administration so that German agents transferred a great deal of routine business to their Czech counterparts. The Germans acted merely as inspectors and supervisors of the Czechs. By the end of 1942, over 350,000 Czech administrators worked under the control of a mere 738 Germans in the Office of the Protector and another 1,146 who sat in various Czech agencies.[22] Heydrich's mission was complete; he apparently was ready to move on to another occupied country, possibly France. However, on 27 May 1942, exactly eight months after his arrival in Prague, a bomb was thrown into his car and Reich Protector SS–Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich was killed.

Heydrich's assassination was Czechoslovakia's most sensational act of rebellion, but it was not carried out by the home resistance. The murder was planned and implemented by Czechs abroad, an assassination ordered by Beneš because the President wanted some dramatic demonstration of the strength of the Czech resistance. The British, acting on the advice of František Moravec, trained, equipped and transported two Czech agents who were dropped into the Protectorate in December 1941.[23] The assassins delayed their mission for five months, during which time their supporters in the Czech underground figured out what they were up to. The home resisters then urgently cabled Beneš, pleading and demanding that the assassination plan be cancelled because of the 'immeasurable' German retaliation it would provoke – but they were ignored.[24]

Beneš sometimes made controversial decisions; this one, to kill Heydrich, aroused criticism as well because of the violent retribution that was bound to follow. Just as the home resisters predicted, the Germans went into a frenzy of revenge, placing the whole country again under martial law. Before Heydrich had quite expired, Hitler ordered that 10,000 Czechs, primarily intellectuals, be taken hostage and 100 shot immediately. One by one, in 5,000 villages and towns, German police went from house to house searching for suspects. Though the bomb had been the work of only a

handful, thousands of Czechs were arrested during the next 6 weeks, and over 1,000 executed, including the imprisoned General Eliáš.[25] The searches flushed out hundreds of men in hiding, but the slaughter was particularly directed against intellectuals and former army officers who were still free.[26] All of the security apparatus was brought to bear, both the Czech gendarmes stationed in the countryside, and the regular police in the cities – all under strict Nazi supervision.

At the height of the terror, the Germans burned down two villages, Lidice, not far from Prague, and Ležáky.[27] By that time seven paratroopers, including the two Czechs who were ordered by the London government to kill Heydrich, had died in a Prague church where they were cornered. In the face of the brutal retaliation, the British tardily renounced their participation in the Munich Pact – a classic example of 'too little and too late.'

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After Heydrich's assassination, all hope – what there was of it – for rising up against the German occupiers lay with Slovakia. Its fascist government was closely monitored by the Germans; however, because Slovakia was not occupied, the resistance had more freedom to operate there than in the Czech lands. As in the Protectorate, one centre of the resistance was the army. It had not been disbanded in Slovakia, and still contained possible confederates who could smuggle heavy weapons to the Czechs. With these, the Czechs hoped to harass the rear of the German army as the Russians approached the Protectorate from the east. A former legionnaire and artillery major in the defunct Czechoslovak army, Jan Moravanský, was by then head of ON, living legally near Prague. His group was at first called Slezák, then later the Tau. It was eventually subsumed into the Council of Three. In 1942, Moravanský had a list of 1,400 former soldiers still living legally, 600 of whom he thought, optimistically, would respond if called to an uprising.

But who was there to lead such a revolt? By 1943 the underground was almost barren. Nothing remained of the large resistance organizations except a few scattered and frightened followers without leaders. Josef Grňa, a former professor of finance, was surviving underground and made contact with some of the military resisters also in hiding. These connections – between Grňa and a general, for example – were arduous undertakings involving a dangerous 15- or 20-mile walk, each man following a map so that the two could intersect at some ditch or tree in the middle of nowhere. People in hiding were totally dependent on those living legally to bring them news, communications and reading material, and to make contact with others in the underground. Grňa was no politician and hardly a leader of revolutionaries, but he was almost the last man standing after the retaliation against Heydrich's assassination. Another who survived the 1941–2 devastation of the resistance was Ambassador Arnošt Heidrich. He had been a frequent Czechoslovak representative at the Geneva disarmament conferences in the 1920s and a confidant of President Beneš. He avoided arrest until 1944.[28] Leopold Chmela was a chief member of the Heidrich group. He survived the war to write a book about Czech losses during the occupation. But none of these Czechs could lead an uprising.

The Germans had meanwhile destroyed all the transmitters used by the resistance. Karel Staller, a technical whiz, was the director of the Brno Small Arms Factory in 1943, and one of the few Czechs still allowed to travel to Slovakia.[29] Hiding microfilm in his shaving kit and in coins, he set up a courier route from Bratislava to Switzerland to London.[30] For over a year, the courier network organized by Staller was practically the only means of contact between the home resistance and President Beneš or between the Czech and Slovak resisters. Some of the information so perilously communicated was essential; some of it not, such as the intelligence that a new resistance group was forming around Grňa and Vojtech Luža, a former army division general. The London government would acknowledge the arrival of microfilm by giving a particular password or phrase in one of the BBC broadcasts. At the start of each Czech broadcast there was a string of such coded announcements:

‘Erica watch. Spring is coming. Memory is watchful. The corn is growing.’ The Germans, of course, heard the communications, too, but it was hoped that they could not decode them.

Radio Moscow, apparently oblivious to geography, was exhorting the home resistance to help the Russians by starting guerrilla warfare. Of all the occupied countries, Czechoslovakia was farthest from any front, too distant for either the Western Allies or the Russians to assist any partisan fighting. Broadcasts from Moscow even urged the home resistance to establish national committees, local bodies of a few cities which would represent the larger population – this at a time when any sort of meeting was a certain way to become a target for arrest. Moreover, the Czechs had no weapons with which to confront the German tanks. General Luza, for one, wanted to make contact with Colonel Theodor Lang of the Protectorate troops. Though these troops carried only light weapons, they were 10,000 strong. He had to argue down the communists in his group who scorned such ‘bourgeois collaborators’.

By autumn 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin had met in Tehran to plan the next offensives of the war. From Sicily, the Allies were progressing northward, while the Red Army had pushed the Germans back to the Dneister River, about 600 miles from the Protectorate. One would suppose that Hitler would be too busy preventing the collapse of his armies to continue the zealous tracking of unregistered Czechs, but in fact his reverses at the front were followed as usual by increased severity in the occupied land. The terror in the Protectorate was never as barbaric as in Poland, but it remained far worse than in Holland, Belgium or France. In 1944, the Germans were executing over 100 people a month in the Protectorate. Hitler continued to eliminate intellectuals and internal enemies just as if he were winning the war, even when Allied troops were at the border of the Reich and German cities were being bombed to rubble. Close observers of those years marvelled at the Nazis’ security apparatus. In the stark face of annihilation, the Germans might have thrown every effort into the critical military struggle. Instead, they continued rooting out Jews, resisters and communists all over occupied Europe, probing into every classroom where contraband words might be lying about and every cellar where shortwave radio signals might penetrate.

By this time, there were finally too few Nazis to police whole populations. The Germans were turning their captured Czech victims into informers, people who purchased the lives of their loved ones with information they provided, however unwillingly. Though they might have had no heart for it, these informers were productive detectives for the Gestapo, and established entire bogus resistance organizations to attract good-faith resisters.[31] The informant system was especially effective against the communists.

Communists had been distinguished resisters in 1940 and 1941, either cooperating with the democratic resistance or vilifying it, according to their directions from Moscow. But they were largely wiped out in the two periods of martial law connected with Heydrich. The Germans were fierce toward anyone associated with communism. Their special attention to Communists thinned out the leftist population, so that it was not until late in 1944 that communist groups emerged. The attitude of the Czechs toward communism was not necessarily friendly, but it was not overwhelmingly hostile. The Communist Party had long been a part of the country’s political life, just like other parties. For Czechs, there was no question that the fascists were the enemy and the Russians the probable deliverers. At the same time, the Czech attitude toward the West was deeply ambivalent, even during the war. After Munich, it was the French and British whom Czechs mistrusted, not the Russians – that is, until the communists imposed monopolistic control in 1948.

At the other end of the resistance’s political spectrum was the right-of-centre PRNC, the Preparatory Revolutionary Nation Committee, preparing for the revolution that would burst forth as the Germans were retreating and the Russians were coming in. PRNC claimed to be the successor to the great resistance networks destroyed by the Gestapo in 1941. It was not a body of active resisters

but rather a ramulose organization that served to put several groups in loose association. People around General Novák were among its leaders: Jaroslav Kvapil, a famous playwright; František Richter, the director of a printing enterprise and a former member of the Czech Legion, a volunteer army that fought in Russia against Austria-Hungary in the First World War – the Legion formed a kind of old-boy network that would later assist the resisters who had been part of it; Judge Emil Lány, former president for the land court for Bohemia; the poet Josef Palivec; literary critic Václav Čzerny; and the writer Jaroslav Kratochvil, who was also a member of the communist underground and used his influence to get the Party to cooperate more closely with the democratic resistance. Some of PRNC's other members were Jaromír Dvoařk and Josef Mainer from Pilsen and Kamil Krofta, a former minister of foreign affairs. One component of PRNC was a group led by Professors Josef Drachovký, Josef Hutter and Růžena Vacek. Another component included representatives of the Czech Protectorate police, such as Bohdan Sefčik. Rudolf Fraštacký served, like Staller, as a courier. Jaroslav Krátký (Zdena), a major of the former Czechoslovak army, was sent by Beneš and Ingr to Slovakia to run secret transmitters connecting London with the main resistance groups there, and also to get information about resistance in the Protectorate. His contact in Bratislava was Rudolf Fraštacký. Zdena was eventually caught by the Gestapo and murdered in prison by the SS.[32]

The Russian parachutists who began coming into the Protectorate in 1944 taught the Czechs about *zemljankas*, a camouflaged hiding place that helped countless resisters survive that last terrible year of the war. First a hole was dug deep enough for a man to stand in and wide enough to hold a bench that could serve as a bed. Then it was walled inside with wooden planks, and a covering of earth and grass was placed over the top. The entrance was concealed in a nearby bush, some feet away.

* * *

It was in the dark of *zemljankas* and attics that many resisters learned of the Normandy invasion. Clearly, the Germans seemed to be losing the war.[33] The resisters had only to hold out and the nightmare would be over. Even then, the Germans squandered their resources hunting down internal resisters. While the Czechs were rejoicing over D-Day, they learned that almost the entire PRNC organization had been wiped out by the Gestapo. General Novák, who had been living legally, decided to await capture rather than flee and abandon his family to the Gestapo's revenge. Arrested during the night of 22 June 1944, he was tortured but not executed, and managed to stay alive in the Gestapo prison until the end of the war. Along with Novak, Moravansky, Colonel Lang and many others were taken. Leopold Chmela was arrested on 6 June, followed soon afterward by the capture of Heidrich himself.[34] General Novák's successor as head of PRNC was General František Bláha, who was then arrested in the autumn of 1944. Bláha's successor was General Fraštisek Slunečko, who had been living underground since 1940 in Bohemia. As the Allies were closing in on the Germans, the Germans were closing in on the resistance, or so it seemed to the isolated souls trying desperately to hang on until the end. This was an illusion because resistance was actually resurging. Networks were popping up toward the end of the war almost faster than the Nazis could smother them.

The resistance could claim no authority without contact with the exiled government, and the London government could not claim to be the voice of Czechoslovakia unless it could maintain a minimum of contact. Secret transmitters were essential so that the home resistance and the exiles could communicate. The Germans, realizing this, dedicated great effort to locating and smashing transmitters. First there had been the Sparta network with eleven transmitters, which provided the Allies with some 20,000 intelligence messages until it was destroyed in 1941. Then the Czechoslovak army abroad trained special volunteers whom the British dropped into the Protectorate. These paratroopers restored communication, along with assassinating Heydrich; but by the beginning of

1943 they, too, had been hunted down. Throughout that year, the Czechs used only couriers, people smuggling messages in their clothing. However, the slow courier system was more and more impractical as the tempo of the war intensified. In April 1944, therefore, Beneš, Ingr and František Moravec, the head of military intelligence abroad, began dispatching new teams of paratroopers, fourteen in all, charged with gathering intelligence on their own and communicating information from the home resistance. Each team included at least one wireless operator with a transmitter.[35] It was difficult enough for paratroopers to land in the Protectorate and find groups to help them – the resisters were, after all, in hiding – but the transmitting itself was dangerous. The bulky transmitters had to be moved frequently lest the Germans follow the radio waves and track them down; yet the only vehicles the Czechs possessed were bicycles. Despite every precaution, the Gestapo usually located the transmitters within a few months.

With the transmitters, several important resistance groups learned of each other's existence and were able to discuss plans for an uprising. A former lieu-tenant colonel, Josef Svatoň, headed an organization that spread from western Bohemia into Moravia and included the remnants of ON. Another man, Josef Císař, led a very important group called Avala. Císař was living legally in Prague and had a regular job. His secret organization included the association of Czech volunteer firemen, men who could mobilize at a moment's notice and who were connected to all the other fire departments across the country. They were the only people in the Protectorate who had at their disposal both gasoline and vehicles – fire engines. The Gestapo could not quash their resistance group because firemen were too badly needed. Císař had also organized the Czech hunting societies. Hunters were spread over the whole country and, moreover, they possessed guns, which they had been allowed to keep. These two groups now joined with General Luža in what was called the Council of Three, or R3, *Rada tří* in Czech. Another supporter was Josef Ouředník, the leader of an organization south of Prague called Sázava. Luža, having been accepted by both London and the home resistance as supreme leader of the projected uprising, did his best to subsume all the diffuse groups, including a Prague association called Revolutionary Trade Unions. Luža's group was no longer a Moravian organization of a few hundred but a federation of scattered thousands.

The London government expected to direct the proposed insurrection from abroad, by use of transmitters, a method that would have been awkward and unreliable considering the tenuous position of all the various underground groups. Luža insisted that the home resistance must control the uprising, get credit for its success and organize the provisional government that would follow.[36] An insurrection was necessary even if the home resistance was not needed to defeat the Germans militarily. Without a revolt, the post-war political field would be dominated by party hacks returning from abroad. What changes were going to be made in the political system had to be made during the brief revolutionary beginning, he warned, or not at all. All the resisters except the communists assumed that at the end of the war these revolutionaries, that is, the resistance leaders who carried out the projected uprising, would take over from the defeated Germans and run the country until President Beneš returned and elections were held. It was expected that the major resistance figures would be offered ministerial positions in any post-war government. The arms for this revolution were to be seized from a storage repository and from an ammunition factory – enough weapons to arm 10,000 men.[37] The British were expected to drop weapons, and a shipment from the Red Army was also expected.

It appeared, however, that the British looked to the Russians to supply anti-German insurgencies. Perhaps the British feared that any weapons they dropped might fall into the hands of the communist allies with whom they were increasingly disillusioned. As for the Russians, having marched over 1,000 miles, they did not want to set things up so as to congratulate the Czechs on liberating themselves. Nor were they eager to take over a country with an independent army that looked to its

own leaders for direction. They chose to ignore whatever expectations the resisters had in the way of arms.

In August 1944, Slovakia erupted in a protracted revolution, led by former military men and supported by both democrats and local communists. It was directed by Lieutenant Colonel Ján Golian, the head of a Slovak underground organization; he had been chosen by Beneš and the government-in-exile, in disregard of Luža's recommendation. The Czech resistance was then bombarded with broadcasts from Moscow exhorting it to follow the Slovak example and take up arms. But in September, before the Czechs could react to the Slovak situation, the Gestapo killed Ouředník and captured Luža's closest aides, shattering the entire Prague section of the organization. In October, Luža, making his difficult way toward Prague with an assistant and false identity cards, was killed by officious Czech gendarmes who, in an excess of punctiliousness, decided to double-check the identities of the two strangers passing through.[38]

* * *

That last autumn of the war marked the time when, by heart–sinking degrees, the resistance leaders realized that they could not carry out a national insurrection. Impulsive, disjointed revolts might break out – suicidal rebellions of poorly equipped and scattered groups. But the organized, massive death blow to a weakened German occupation army was a chimera. Not only did it seem to the resisters that the Allies were withholding heavy weapons, but by November the resistance had lost the only military leaders who could have used them effectively – Svatoň, Moravanský, Novák, Luža, the other generals. The Czechs watched the Warsaw Revolt that began on 1 August, just as the Red Army approached the Polish capital, and followed it to its frightful conclusion two months later – an insurrection waged in much the same way as the one various Czech underground groups were planning. They were not encouraged.

They watched the Slovakian insurrection right next to the Protectorate with the same sense of despair. The Slovak revolt had begun three weeks ahead of Golian's schedule, when the Germans ended the Slovaks' puppet rule and moved to occupy the country directly.[39] Because the uprising did not take place within their zone of operation, the British and Americans refused to provide arms to the insurgents except, towards the end, in sporadic and sparing quantities.[40] It was believed that the Russians were indifferent to the fate of resisters who owed obedience not to the Red Army, but to independent leaders. After two months the insurrection collapsed and Golian was captured and executed by the Germans. Czechs in the Protectorate knew nothing of the policies of the Allies that doomed the uprising, nor did they even know that 10,000 Slovaks had been sacrificed in that blood–drenched struggle.[41] But they did see that the uprising had not destroyed the Germans' power over the country, and that such revolts dwindled in the end into guerrilla skirmishes that had little military effect.

That autumn four main Soviet parachute groups floated down to the Protectorate – some sixty people in all – in advance of the Red Army. Though the parachute groups took the names of Czech heroes, such as Jan Hus or Miroslave Tyrš, they took their orders from the Red Army. Their task was to harass the retreating Nazis who, followed by veritable brigades of civilian German sympathizers, were trying to get to some part of the Protectorate still occupied by Germans. German sympathizers would be ejected from Czechoslovakia after the war, in one of the transfers of populations that took place in several countries.

Partisan attacks, gnawing at the enemy at the margins of the front, became the main form of the Czech resistance from November 1944 until the war's end the following May. In the area around Brno, these attacks were carried out by various bands; there were no groups that were distinctly communist. After the war, the communists claimed to have been the backbone of the resistance;

however, in the central Protectorate, it was non-communist resisters who were active.[42] This scattered partisan activity was no substitute for an armed insurrection, a fact that was proved by the failed insurrections of the Poles, Slovaks, Tito's Partisans in Yugoslavia in 1941, and even the *maquis* in France, who were fighting under more favourable conditions than the Czechs. One thing the paratroopers did accomplish was to organize escaped prisoners of war. At first these ex-prisoners were armed only with their hatred of the Germans. Some 50,000 Germans were in the Protectorate in 1944, retreating from the Allies. The partisans, now including the ex-prisoners, attacked their transports on the highways and stole their weapons; they also raided gendarme stations for their guns. The partisans would lay steel nails or a stolen steel cable across the highways (practically the only motor vehicles on the roads were German – everybody else rode bicycles). A truck would have to stop, whereupon the attackers would kill the occupants and take their weapons. They also raided gendarme stations where they typically took the small arms but did not hurt the Czech gendarmes. The Germans finally had to take away all the carbines from the gendarme stations so that they would not lose them to the resistance.

Having no consistent communication, a resistance group was never sure what other groups were doing. The partisans learned only after the war how many disparate and largely independent resistance clusters there were: 7,500 active resistance fighters, distributed in 120 groups, engaged in military or quasi-military activities, each one using or having at his or her disposal a personal weapon. In addition to these fighters, there were thousands of supporters who were outside of any structure and were not referred to as 'resisters'. The General Luža group (R3), made up of the son and followers of the murdered leader, had 856 active members centred near Brno, not counting the people who assisted them with supplies, shelter and silence. It was the most important organization within R3, which was in turn the largest organization in the Czech resistance by 1945, consisting of ten groups.

* * *

By late spring 1945, the guerrillas in the central Protectorate controlled the countryside, but not the towns, so that the Germans could not travel except in large groups. Still, villagers sheltering resisters and bringing them food in their *zemljankas* were putting themselves in danger. The latest Gestapo tactic was not to arrest those sheltering a resister, but to lock the whole family in the house and then set fire to it, a task they attended to conscientiously even while retreating.

The German response to the increased guerrilla activity was two-fold and effective. Karl Hermann Frank reorganized the German police force, detaching special units and placing them in every district to keep the roads safe for the German retreat. The *Jagdkommandos*, as they were called, shot and hanged partisans on the spot, including people who had only been marginally helpful to the resisters. An even greater nuisance to the partisans were the Vlasov troops – anti-Bolsheviks released from German prisoner-of-war camps.[43] By 1944 these formed an army of some 100,000, fighting at the side of Germans for the liberation of Russia from Stalin. They combed the villages looking for partisans, or helped the *Jagdkommandos* by posing as escaped Soviet prisoners and infiltrating the partisans.

The Americans were by now regularly dropping Czech parachute groups into the Protectorate, exiles who were returning to join in the final fight and bringing weapons with them. These were not the massive arms infusions the resisters wanted, but rather arms to aid the guerrilla activity – Sten guns, one or two machine guns, revolvers, plastic explosives and so on. The quantity of arms contained in the twelve drops was negligible. The deliveries were carried out, after a long bureaucratic process, by a US Army Air Force Special Group stationed in Livorno. Several delivery planes to the Protectorate were shot down, despite precise planning. The timing of a drop was

signalled by code over a BBC broadcast. The weapons were packed in 300lb containers which were attached to parachutes. When they floated down, they had to be opened and divided among the partisans then and there. The partisans had to plan some means of taking the weapons away, as they still did not have cars or trucks. Though in headlong retreat, the Germans did not stand aside deferentially during these operations. Two of the paratrooper teams were struck by the Gestapo in May 1944, even as the home resisters were scrambling from one shelter to another, having to move constantly.

The Germans were being harried by free-for-all outbursts against them as they withdrew. It was not always clear whether Germans or Czechs were in control of a particular town. Once the Germans left and Czechs took over, the Germans might briefly come back to secure their line of communications, execute the new local officials who had begun setting up a post-war administration of the town and then retreat again. The front was not an obvious line with opposing armies on one side and the other, but a ragged no-man's-land where any soldiers one encountered might belong to either the Allied armies or the German army.

Throughout the war, the Czechs had heard from both London and Moscow that the home resistance, the people who were sacrificing and suffering, would form the post-war government. Long before the liberation, Beneš had decided that the survival of Czechoslovakia depended on the country's accommodation with both the Western powers and the Soviet Union.[44] But by the winter of 1944/5, as the Red Army covered more and more of Czechoslovakia, the balance between the Czech democratic parties represented by Beneš in London and the communists led by Klement Gottwald in Moscow had shifted in favour of the communists. According to the communists, they had been the predominant element in the resistance; they rewrote wartime history to exclude the activity of non-communists. By the end of the war, it was a foregone conclusion that the communists would predominate in any post-war government; but the majority of Czechs believed, along with the London government-in-exile, that the communists would follow a democratic system in Czechoslovakia.[45]

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As often happens in the last spasms of war, the country suddenly exploded in revolt – not the organized national rebellion that the resistance had planned at the beginning of the occupation, but a spate of uprisings that erupted unpre– dictably in towns where the Germans were still on the way out. The uprisings were random, unconnected and ferocious. They started on 1 May in central Moravia just as the Russians were about to move in. Without waiting for the Germans to leave, people began seizing the government offices and appointing themselves the local representatives of the Czechoslovak Republic. These revolts swept the country. In some places, the rebels tried to disarm the Germans; in others, they let the Germans continue with the business of leaving. Sometimes the German commander in the region, not wanting to delay his withdrawal, ignored what was happening so long as his own forces were not molested. In others, each uprising was answered with a furious reprisal. In the middle of it all, on 30 April 1945, every radio in Europe broadcast the news that Hitler had committed suicide.

Several factors contributed to these revolts. As the Germans retreated westward, they emptied their concentration camps and transported the inmates, especially Jews, ahead of the front. Until then, the Czechs were still largely unaware of what became known as the Holocaust. Suddenly, one community after another in the Protectorate saw tens of thousands of naked, starving people packed into cattle trucks or stumbling over the hills in forced marches. They saw Germans mistreating these dying victims, who had once been Jewish teachers, housewives and schoolchildren, saw the Germans brutalizing them or shooting them without remorse. It shocked people who were past shocking, Czechs whose own relatives had suffered at the hands of the Nazis.[46]

The Moravian uprisings of late April and early May 1945 were futile – crushed in every place where the Germans responded to the provocations. Nevertheless, the fever of revolt spread to Prague on 5 May 1945. The Czech National Council, a colourless organization, had for several weeks been preparing an insurrection in the capital with the remnants of ON and other former military people. However, the mass uprising took the Council by surprise and prematurely forced the leaders into the open. Before the Council could mobilize, ordinary citizens and Protectorate policemen seized the Prague radio station and were broadcasting frantic calls to the Allies for help. The former generals František Slunečko and Karel Kutlvašr – the men who had put ON back together after General Novák's arrest – were at first the de facto military leaders calling for arms. The citizenry threw up 1,600 street barricades to paralyse German movement, barriers manned by 30,000 Czech civilians with no effective weapons. As the Germans got out of their vehicles to remove the obstacles, they were picked off by snipers. They soon learned to use Czech women and children as shields while they grappled with the barricades. The Vlasov troops that had been German collaborators now changed sides and fought alongside the Czechs. It was not manpower, however, that the Czechs lacked, but weapons. Men and women with rakes and pistols faced 30,000 to 40,000 trained fighters armed with tanks and artillery. Their battle raged for three days, broadcast all over Europe hour by desperate hour as they pleaded with the Allies to send arms.

All their appeals were ignored by the Americans, though General Patton and the Third Army were less than 50 miles from Prague. General Eisenhower steadfastly refused to allow American troops to move because Prague fell within the Soviet zone of proposed occupation. Even Beneš and the government in exile that had returned to the country and were waiting in Košice – even they were silent. As many as 2,000 Czechs were slaughtered by the Germans. The Germans, fearful of the approaching Red Army, were then induced to abandon the struggle. Anxious to evade the Russians and surrender instead to the Americans, they capitulated to the Czech National Council on 8 May and marched off to the American lines, carrying only their small arms. When the Red Army entered Prague on 9 May, they found it in the hands of the Czech National Council, a situation not at all to Stalin's liking, judging from his reaction. He refused to recognize the Council or have any dealings with it and, following Beneš' orders, the Council resigned.[47]

The war did not end sharply on 9 May in Czechoslovakia, but rather died by imperceptible degrees. The Germans moved out in orderly columns, sometimes accompanied by a tank; the Russians moved in, met by clumsy welcoming speeches and a party atmosphere in every community.[48] The next wave of the Red Army swept over the country, and the next and the next – young, child-like peasant draftees, goodhearted but uncontrollable. Their worst transgressions seemed minor compared with the brutality of the Nazis they had chased out.

The war was over. The cities were full of demolished buildings and damaged psyches. Behind each face were experiences that could never be erased. This girl had been raped. That man had been tortured. Another had lost a child in a bomb attack. It was a country of victims, one in which nobody looked forward to a new beginning. The Red Army, not local communists, had liberated the country. Except in a few places, Czech communists had not been leaders in the resistance, yet after the war they emerged as the prominent element in every administrative and political unit. The resisters allowed themselves to be outshouted by others clamouring for recognition. Soon everyone was hearing that the democratic resistance had not been important in the war, only the communists in the underground – propaganda generated from Moscow and repeated so incessantly that perhaps most people started to believe it.

* * *

The post-war government that emerged in Czechoslovakia was an appalling assemblage of old

politicos, culled from the numerous and ineffectual pre-war parties, and communists. Since everything was done under the aegis of the Soviet liberators, Beneš was obliged to install communists in the crucial ministries. They ran most of the cities, appointed themselves to posts of authority at every level, and had a great deal of backstage power. The new prime minister was Zdeněk Fierlinger, formerly ambassador to the Soviet Union, a social democrat from the old pool who collaborated so closely with the communists that he earned the sobriquet 'Quislinger'. Gottwald was deputy prime minister. Thus, communist party members and spineless democrats back from exile held all the major posts.

As a sop to Beneš, the Communists agreed to the appointment of Jan Masaryk as minister of foreign affairs, the post he had held in the London government.[49] General Novák became military commander of Moravia at the end of the war. He joined the Communist Party, but fell foul of it. In 1950 he was arrested and tortured by the communists, just as he had been by the Nazis. He went to prison for six years, was rehabilitated in 1965 and died poor in 1988. As for the other resisters who were supposed to lead the new order, they were all waved aside. Non-communist resisters were characterized as anti-Soviet, and the resistance movement was described as having been split between rightists and communists. This was far from the truth. Everyone in the Czech resistance had been oriented toward the left, and those who were not communists were often Russophile. By 1947, Czechoslovakia was the last country in the Soviet sphere with a functioning parliamentary democracy; but not for long. In September, three non-communist ministers received parcels containing bombs, though all three, Jan Masaryk, Petr Zenkl and Prokop Drtina, survived the assassination attempts. In February 1948, the communists carried out a nearly bloodless coup that left them the sole masters of the country for the next forty years.

General Ingr, who had been appointed ambassador to the Netherlands, again went into exile and worked against the communists from Washington DC. Prokop Drtina, having been forced out as Minister of Justice, attempted suicide by jumping from of a window. He broke his legs and shattered the bones in his feet; after an excruciatingly painful period in the hospital he was imprisoned for many years. Jan Masaryk, whose very name was synonymous with Czechoslovak independence, astonished everyone by remaining in the Gottwald government. However, on 10 March 1948 his body was found in a courtyard of the Czernin Palace. He had either jumped or been pushed out of a third-floor window. Purges began – of the press, universities, civil service, sports clubs – in which people who were not overt communist sympathizers were expelled from their offices and consigned to disagreeable jobs. In particular, arrest warrants were issued for people who had been prominent in the resistance, that is, the people who had demonstrated a capacity for leadership that would make them magnets for anticommunist activity.

This time there could be no question of going underground and trying to survive until the end of the war, for there was to be no war. All of the resisters who could not transform themselves into obsequious communists tried to become invisible. Many went into hiding and were captured. Others managed to flee to the West, where they passed their lives in exile. The post-war years turned into the Cold War years. Their dreams of returning to their country gradually faded.

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Many of those who sacrificed their lives in the resistance, especially intellectuals and military men, had no real choice as to whether to fight the occupation. They were persecuted whether or not they participated in anti-German activity. Others were sucked into the resistance when they could not turn away a hunted friend. Still others were drawn into the resistance by their very upbringing and the humanitarian ideals instilled in them. Separately and collectively, the resisters were inconvenient pests that the occupiers dispersed or destroyed in deadly waves, again and again. Despite their immense