

Operation Anthropoid: The Audacious SOE Mission in Nazi-Occupied Prague



The Special Operations Executive (SOE) was a secret British intelligence agency during World War II. It conducted covert operations to support resistance movements and undermine enemy forces across Europe. One of the most daring and remarkable missions undertaken by the SOE was Operation Anthropoid in the Third Reich.

The Target: Reinhard Heydrich

Reinhard Heydrich, a high-ranking SS officer and one of the architects of the Holocaust, was chosen as the target for Operation Anthropoid. Code-named "HHhH" (Himmlers Hirn heißt Heydrich - Himmler's brain is called Heydrich), this mission was devised to eliminate one of the most feared men in the Nazi regime.



SOE in the Third Reich: Special Operations Executive's German Section in WW2

by Damien Lewis (Kindle Edition)

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Heydrich was the chief of the Reich Main Security Office and second in command to Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS. Known as the "Butcher of Prague," Heydrich's ruthless tactics and efficient administration made him a formidable adversary.

The Planning and Execution

Operation Anthropoid was designed to assassinate Heydrich in Prague, the capital of German-occupied Czechoslovakia. Seven highly trained Czechoslovak agents, who had been trained in Britain, were chosen for this mission.

The plan involved ambushing Heydrich's car during his daily commute and attacking him with a modified anti-tank mine. On May 27, 1942, as Heydrich's car slowed down at a hairpin bend, the operatives launched their attack. Although

injured, Heydrich initially fought back, but his wounds proved fatal. He succumbed to infection a few days later.

The Aftermath

The assassination of Reinhard Heydrich was a significant blow to the Nazi regime. Hitler personally ordered a brutal crackdown in retaliation, resulting in mass executions and the destruction of the Czech villages of Lidice and Ležáky. Thousands of innocent lives were lost as a consequence of Heydrich's assassination.

However, Operation Anthropoid demonstrated the resilience and courage of the Czechoslovak resistance. The mission not only eliminated one of the key figures of the Third Reich but also sent a powerful message to the German occupants and boosted the morale of the Czech people.

The Legacy

The audacity and impact of Operation Anthropoid have made it one of the most iconic and celebrated SOE missions of World War II. It showcased the effectiveness of covert operations in disrupting enemy forces and bolstering resistance movements.

The sacrifice of the agents involved in Operation Anthropoid will never be forgotten. Their bravery serves as a reminder of the lengths people were willing to go to fight against tyranny and injustice. The operation remains a symbol of hope and inspiration to those who strive for freedom and justice.

Operation Anthropoid is a testament to the power of intelligence, determination, and bravery in the face of overwhelming odds. It is a chapter in history that

serves as a constant reminder of the human spirit's ability to resist and fight for what is right.

Click here to learn more about Operation Anthropoid and the courageous agents involved!



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'X' Section of S.O.2, a part of the Ministry of Economic Warfare, was formed in November 1940. Just two months later it came under the command of Major R.H. Thornley and, eventually, part of Special Operations Executive. Its role was to establish channels of communication into Germany and Austria for subversive activities and to build up inside those countries a network of agents.

From the very beginning, 'X' Section faced an enormous task penetrating Germany and Austria. Such were the difficulties faced, that it was the opinion of the Secret Intelligence Service that there was 'no point' in starting a German Section as it could never succeed.

The internal control exercised by the likes of the SS and Gestapo was so rigid that organised resistance in the accepted sense of the term was all but

impossible inside Germany. Acknowledging, therefore, the handicaps with which he was faced, Thornley decided not to attempt the kind of large-scale operations conducted by SOE in Occupied territories. Instead, 'X' Section aimed at concentrating on sporadic sabotage wherever possible to alarm the enemy security services and engage in administrative sabotage, which was seen as a valuable weapon against the methodically minded Germans.

Its first two agents were sent into Germany via Yugoslavia in February 1941. In July of that year the first successful sabotage operation took place with the distribution of forged ration cards which disrupted the German economy; those caught spending the cards faced long prison sentences or even death.

Other such efforts followed, including using itching powder which was placed in clothing and bedding of German troops, the distribution of 'black' propaganda, and the spreading of alarm and despondency to weaken German morale. As the war progressed, 'X' Section expanded and the first operation of dropping an agent by parachute into Germany took place in February 1943. Information was also passed by radio from inside Germany and eventually, despite immense handicaps, a courier line was established between Austria/Germany and Switzerland.

Though limited in what it could hope to accomplish, 'X' Section achieved considerable success in 'soft' sabotage which unquestionably helped to undermine the Nazi war effort.



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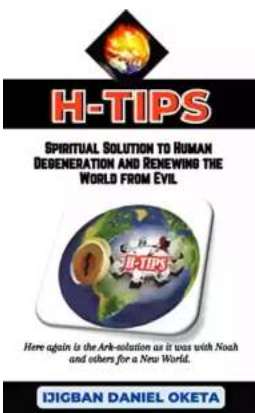
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