



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

DEPARTMENT OF NEW JERSEY
DISTRICT 2



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A Little Bit of History

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June 14th is Flag Day. This is the anniversary of when Congress established the American Flag back in 1777. If you have an American Flag fly it. Show people you are proud to be an American. June 6th also is the Anniversary of the landing at Normandy. It was the beginning of the end for Adolf Hitler and, his reign of misery. The sacrifices these soldiers and sailors made are unforgettable.

Adolf Hitler was a bad man. Most would say evil. I would agree. Although, Hitler could not have acted alone, and in fact he didn't. As bad as Hitler was, Reinhard Heydrich was even worse. He joined the National Socialist German Workers Party early and proved to be exactly what Hitler wanted. He was put in charge of intelligence and quickly made up a list of enemies to Hitler's rise in power. Heydrich organized purges to get rid of Hitler's political enemies. Hundreds of people were arrested or killed to clear away any opposition. He gave the orders to carry out Kristallnacht, or night of broken glass, in which, the police arrested Jews and moved them into concentration camps. Jewish Synagogues and businesses were burned down. Thousands of Jewish people were sent to the camps.

Once this was done, Reinhard Heydrich became the Director of the Gestapo. He attended the Wannsee Conference, where he and other members of the party finalized a plan for the deportation and execution of Jews, Gypsies and other undesirables from Germany and eventually, all of Europe using trains and Concentration camps. He carried out the night and fog decree, in which if the Gestapo thought you were an enemy to Germany you could be arrested and disappear. This usually happened at night and your neighbor would never know what happened to you. Thousands of people disappeared this way, and an exact count is not known. This decree was designed to spread fear among the people. This tactic worked well for the National Socialists.

The National Socialist German Workers Party enjoyed the work Heydrich did. Hitler promoted him. In case you are wondering, they took the NA from National

and the ZI from Socialist and shortened the name to the Nazi Party. I know there is no ZI in Socialist but, there is if you are speaking German.

Czechoslovakia was taken over by Germany and Reinhard Heydrich was put in charge over it to Germanize the Czechs. He immediately started the process of crushing the Czech culture. He shut down cultural centers. Arrested thousands of Czechs and either executed them or sent them to concentration camps. His long term goal once the war was over was to exterminate or deport most of the population.

The Czech Government in exile had enough. They didn't want to sit back and wait for Liberation. They were in London, and they came up with a plan to assassinate Heydrich. Jan Kubis and Jozef Gabcik would lead a commando team that would parachute into Czechoslovakia and try to kill Heydrich. England went along with the plan but, they warned the exiled Czech Government that this might not be a good idea. There are two problems with an assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. Number 1 is Adolf Hitler and number 2 is Heinrich Himmler. It was well known that neither one would not think twice about murdering innocent people as a reprisal for the killing of Heydrich. This was 1942 and there was no Allied Military Force in Occupied Europe yet. The Czechs went ahead anyway. The commando team parachuted into Czechoslovakia in December of 1941 and waited for their chance.

The assassins picked a street in which, Heydrich would have to use. It was well known that he rode around in a car with no top. He traveled with no guards. They chose an intersection where his car would have to slow down to make a turn. Their chance came on May 27th 1942. His car came down the road. Jozef Gabcik took aim as the car slowed to turn and his gun jammed. Heydrich saw him and ordered the car to halt, so he could fight his attacker. Jan Kubis saw his chance and threw a bomb into the car. The bomb went off and the car was wrecked. Heydrich was badly wounded. They then took off running and amazingly, Heydrich gave chase. He soon collapsed and was taken to a hospital.

Doctors pulled pieces of the upholstery from his body. He had many injuries but it was thought he might recover. As fate would have it, he took a turn for the worse and he went into a coma. On June 4th 1942 Reinhard Heydrich died. His attackers didn't fare any better. Kubis and Gabcik and some of their friends in the resistance died fighting the SS troops sent to capture them. The gun battle took place in an Orthodox Church.

Just as the English predicted, Hitler was infuriated with the assassination. Two towns thought to have aided in the assassination were the targets of his rage.

Lidice and Lezaky were burned to the ground and the ruins bulldozed. All the males over the age of 16 were executed. The women from one of the towns were also executed. Over 13,000 people were arrested, jailed, or sent to a concentration camp. Four pregnant women received state mandated abortions before they were sent to the camp. This is why most countries don't like to assassinate leaders, not even horribly evil ones. This story doesn't have a happy ending.

This June marks 71 years since he died. I don't think anyone will miss him. Reinhard Heydrich was a mass murderer. He used it to elevate his career. He was an absolute monster of unimaginable proportions. If anyone deserved to be assassinated it was him, but was it worth it? The Civilians suffered for it. Hitler's Socialist Party put everyone at his mercy and, we see he had none. Adolf and his minion had a bad June in 1942, but thank God, the one he has in 1944 would be worse.