



The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich: The Czech Resistance's Killing of the Top Nazi Official during World War II

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures *Describes Heydrich's war career, the plot to kill him, and the aftermath of the assassination *Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents

“Since it is opportunity which makes not only the thief but also the assassin, such heroic gestures as driving in an open, unarmoured vehicle or walking about the streets unguarded are just damned stupidity, which serves the Fatherland not one whit. That a man as irreplaceable as Heydrich should expose himself to unnecessary danger, I can only condemn as stupid and idiotic.” - Hitler Cloak and dagger adventure, with daring commandos parachuted deep behind enemy lines to kill a sinister mastermind, belongs chiefly to the realm of thriller novels or films. However, World War II stretched over such vast territories and affected so many hundreds of millions of people that nearly every possible human interaction, from the vilest to the noblest, and from the most pedestrian to the exotically adventurous, achieved reality at some point during the conflict. The assassination of Reinhard Heydrich stands out as one of the war's most remarkable secret operations. “The man with the iron heart,” as Adolf Hitler dubbed him, made a fitting target for the dramatic events which unfolded in Prague on May 27th, 1942. According to testimony by the historian Michael Freund, “He is one of the greatest criminal figures of the Third Reich. Nowhere in the histories of the Third Reich has [Heydrich] been awarded his rightful place. He is a man of outstanding significance, a criminal mind of Luciferic grandeur.” (Dederichs, 2009, 17). During the early stages of the war, the Reich Protector often walked the streets of Prague alone or with just one or two escorts, and he also favored an open-topped Mercedes 320-C convertible, which left him fully exposed to snipers, bomb throwers, and the like. Though he was ordered by the Führer to install armored plates inside the seat backs to limit the effect of grenades hurled into the interior of his vehicle, these armor pieces remained idle in the castle garage on the date of Heydrich's assassination. By contrast, Heydrich found time to have expensive horsehair upholstery installed in the touring car, providing a springy, comfortable ride. That would be all the good fortune a British-trained team of Czech assassins would need. Even though the assassination attempt was mostly botched (to the extent that the assassins initially assumed they had failed), shrapnel from an anti-tank grenade caused the top Nazi official severe injuries, killing him a little over a week later. Even as Heydrich lay mortally wounded, Hitler and the Nazis planned severe reprisals, and the most notorious would come at Lidice, which the Germans tenuously (and incorrectly) linked to the plot. The Nazis ultimately razed the small village to the ground and killed every male over the age of 15 in town before sending the remainder off to concentration camps. The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich chronicles the plot to kill one of the top Nazi officials and the aftermath. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about the assassination of Heydrich like never before, in no time at all.

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