

MENE TEKEL

I will tell you a sentence my friend Zdena Opatrná wrote 40 years ago as a dedication to my book, *Slapoty do Mexika* (1971), she was one of the four brave mountaineers who walked across Europe and North America at the 1968 Olympics to Mexico:

Jirina, the way to happiness is freedom, and the way to freedom is courage.

During the time of the Czechoslovak Republic, many of our citizens had to leave the country. Their human rights were limited and in many cases their lives were endangered. Sadly, it was also those who fought for the liberation of the state after the Second World War.

On April 22, 1949, 4 pilots with families from 311th Fighter Squadron began their journey from not free Czechoslovakia to freedom.

From the chronicle of my father Vaclav Formanek:

1949

I am a control officer at the airport in Pardubice. I am in a glass tower, I have 3 radios and 3 soldiers, I manage the start and landing of airplanes in the circuit - landing and starts. I conduct controlled landing by goniometer targeting - for fog and night. Responsible work. Foreign officers are dismissed and fly to Germany and then to England. Only one left at the airport in Pardubice. Captain Nyc, who was the most angry of the English, and who, on 22nd of April 1949, flew away from Nachod airport with his friends, their wives and children to England by Siebel. The airplane landed safely at Manchester Airport.

On April 22, 1949, the captain Nyc, as commander of the squadron, issued an order to start 30 aircraft of the Air Academy after 5 minutes intervals on the line Pardubice - Liberec - Karlovy Vary - Pilsen. He joined these planes and flew away. He told me that he did not have a radio telegraphist, that he had sent the aircraft on the track, and he himself he flew on an experimental flight and he would land in Hradec Králové for the teacher.

A major investigation and blaming of myself started.

I said to general Vicherka, "When I have a radar to see through the brain, who has the intention flying away then I can prevent it." From 1.5.1949 I am released, we still live in a villa at the airport, but in August we move to the cottage of my brother-in-law in Hradec Králové.

On September 23, 1949, at 22 o'clock in the action DZ, I was taken for a protocol to Pardubice. After that 3 days in the Pardubice district jail, then 3 days in a law enforcement office in Pardubice, and on October 3, 1949, I was taken to Mírov prison by two gendarmes.

I met some airmen and famous officers. I am in the company of 300 officers and on November 23 there are another 100, December 23 next 200, in January 1950 then 180 (altogether 780 officers of the Czechoslovak army).

One pilot training was worth 5,000,000 Czech crowns.

From Mírov and Hronec prison, my dad returned after 15 months, in November 1950. He worked for up to 60 years only in the workers' professions, as well as my mother. We, children, have been looking for a way to education with great difficulty.

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