

## *Major-general* **ANTON PETRÁK**

*Born on 14 April 1912 in Vienna - Johannitergasse No. 1*

*Died on 7 February 2009 in Ružomberok - in the Military Hospital*

Infantry Staff Captain (Major-general Ret.), Czechoslovak paratroopers' instructor in Great Britain, Accompanying Weapons Company Commander of the Motorized Battalion with the Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade in Great Britain.

Anton Petrák was born to Anton and Jenofefa (née Boháčková). His parents came from the Moravia region. He spent his first years in Vienna. After the Czechoslovak Republic was established the family moved to Slovakia. He attended the upper classes of the elementary schools in Hlohovec and Trnava. In 1928 he began his studies at the Academy of Commerce in Nitra.

After the leaving school exam he worked shortly with the Ministry of Justice in Prague. He joined the national military service in Infantry Regiment in Břeclav on 1 October 1932. In the period from 1 October 1932 to 30 May 1933 he attended the Reserve Officers School in Brno. From September 1933 to June 1935 he studied at the Military Academy in Hranice. On 1 July 1935 he was advanced to the rank of Lieutenant in 39 Infantry Regiment in Bratislava. He worked there as a Platoon Commander. On 16 January 1937 he left for the 1<sup>st</sup> Course for Cannon Platoon Commanders in Milovice.

After his return in February 1937 he became a Cannon Platoon Commander in the Accompanying Weapons Company; in February 1939 a 10 Company Commander. After the Slovak State was established in March 1939 he left for Brno to stay with his parents. In summer he worked at the highway construction. In December he began to work with the District Court in Brno.

In March 1940 Anton Petrák fled through Slovakia, Budapest to Beirut; from Beirut on a ship to France. As soon as on 15 May 1940 he presented himself by the Czechoslovak authorities in Agda and he was appointed a Training Company Commander. After the French capitulation he was transported, together with the rest of Czechoslovak units, to Great Britain, landing on 7 July 1940. There he was allocated to the Anti-vehicle Cannon Battery with the 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak Mixed Brigade being formed (since July 1941 it was re-designated as the 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade Group). In January 1941 he became the Platoon Commander and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battery liaison officer. On 28 October 1940 he was advanced to the rank of Infantry First-Lieutenant and on 28 October 1941 Infantry Captain.

In the period from 5 February 1942 to 4 March 1942 he attended a British Company commanders' course. From 18 July to 15 August he attended an Assault course in the central training centre of Czechoslovak paratroopers **STS 25 (Special Training School)**. The training took place in **Traigh House** on the West Coast of **Scotland** and was organised by the **British SOE (Special Operation Executive)**. After passing a separate paratrooper course he was asked by the British party to stay as an instructor, liaison officer and translator. He participated in trainings the parachutists deployed on the territory of the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia.

On 21 May 1943 he returned to the 1st Independent Brigade as a Deputy Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Motorized Battalion Company, then already the 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade Group (after 1 September 1943). From 14 October 1943 to 8 December 1943 he attended another tank course. Thanks to his qualifications he was appointed a