

# The Winged Lions

A unique poetic form of archive storytelling with never before seen footage



The Odyssean story of Czechoslovak airmen fighting the Nazis across France, Britain, The Middle East, Russia, Poland and Slovakia. The bittersweet return to their homeland, initially as heroes before persecution at the hands of the communists.

## **Synopsis: Through the airmen's own words**

The film tells the story of Czechoslovak airmen who escaped to fight after the Munich Agreement. It follows their experiences across the whole of Europe and the euphoria of their return at the end of the war and their betrayal and persecution once the communists took power in 1948. With their perceptive text the airmen act almost as observational documentarists on the peoples and countries in which they serve. A fascinating outsider's perspective on Britain and other countries at war. This will not be a heroic film but will show two very young men struggling with their fear, the necessity of the war, their desire to live life to the full and the need to do the right thing.

Our film is composed entirely of period, partly unseen, archive footage accompanied by the narration of two prominent Czechoslovak airmen, František Fajtl and Filip Jánký. The film will work with sensitively transformed fragments from the airmen's rich, post war, literary work enlivened by a pair of actors who are at the same age as the two airmen were during the war.

Their words will accompany us throughout the film in the form of a muted inner discourse. In the editing composition, their words find themselves in juxtaposition with period archival footage and specially composed music. The aim should be that, through their observations, the real documentarists are the actual airmen.

The story is exceptional in that it naturally takes the viewer to both the Western and Eastern fronts of World War II. Fajtl and Jánký were among the few airmen who first went to France during the war, then to Great Britain and finally to the East serving in the Soviet Union, Poland and Slovakia. Their observations, throughout their travels, have a remarkable "cultural-anthropological" quality which fascinates even now.

They were not only war heroes but also extremely perceptive observers. Both were capable of poignant reflections - about life, death and everything in-between. About big dramas in the sky and small, sometimes seemingly banal, but still not unimportant "dramas" on earth. About a young person in a foreign country who does not fully understand everything, but tries their best to appreciate and learn to live in. About girls, dancers, pub fights, poaching or theft of jet fuel, but also about the death of friends, about everyday fears, about the ever-recurring feeling of guilt and desire for revenge. Fajtl and Jánký were always unconditionally honest while not taking themselves too seriously. Thanks to this, their depiction of war-torn Europe is so plastic and authentic, and their introspection so special, that their world opens before us, in a way which is easy to understand and still relevant today.

The film ends with a chilling epilogue in which the two airmen are rewarded with communist persecution for their heroic acts during the war.

Their story is that of a rare, today almost endangered species of people, who always do what the situation demands of them without much fuss, and are ready to make sacrifices, even if it means the laying down of their lives.

Among the archival footage, gathered from across the continent, a unique place is taken by material from director Jiří Weiss who filmed Czechoslovak war pilots in Britain. He did not include an important part of the material in his films at the time, and the material lay idle for many decades. Its cinematographic quality is quite extraordinary.



# Teaser



Teaser with English subtitles  
Teaser with English voices

# Treatment

## I. Dramaturgical Structure

The film, composed entirely of period, partly unseen, archive footage from numerous countries, accompanies the viewer through the narration of two prominent Czechoslovak airmen, František Fajtl and Filip Jánský, during World War II. Two brave Czechoslovak airmen - the first a pilot, the second a gunner on a bomber. The first a correct gentleman, the second more wild. Both served first on the Western and later the Eastern Front. Both were not only sensitive observers of the surrounding world, but also lived a rich inner life. And they both wrote very well. In our film, these two "documentary filmmakers" will take the viewer through a war archival landscape in France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, Poland and Slovakia.

Their rich literary work offers an extremely interesting personal reflection on life during the war. It is full of precise observations, stimulating reflections and, last but not least, engaging stories. Sometimes they are just small, often very funny micro situations, other times it's a really big story - often with a tragic undertone - and in places even with an existential psychological depth.

The basic dramaturgical idea is simple: Fajtl and Jánský were themselves first-class "documentarians", and their perceptive reflections on the world must therefore be given the maximum possible space in the film. The aim of the director and his team is to follow them rather than to provide their own commentary. The director, coming from an observational documentary filmmaking background, intends to use where possible the same principles of following where the characters take him in this archive documentary.

Communication will be through their inner speech, a kind of muted personal diary. This will come from authentically adapted passages of their literary texts, which in the film will be brought to life by two young actors of the same age as the airmen were during the war. This means it will not be the usual "memories retold in the old documentary style," but, with the juxtaposition of the young actors' voices with archive footage, should feel as if it takes place "here and now" or that the past comes to life while viewing.

Finding a suitable juxtaposition of the personal speeches of both main protagonists in the editing composition will of course be crucial. At this point, however, it is necessary to describe what will roughly take place during its course, and what different topics its two title protagonists will deal with. The film is supposed to be an intimate diary of two very different pilots who found themselves in similar places at a similar time, but who each experienced their war career in their own way.



The basic narrative line is divided into four parts, of which the first and third areas get the main space:

#### 1. Western front – France and Britain

We find both heroes in England, where they risk their lives in air battles on a daily basis, while still trying to live at least a little normally. They certainly do not love war, but they are determined to fight it successfully. And to repay the Nazis properly. We follow them in the air and on the ground and gradually witness how they learn to overcome fear, how they curse unpredictable weather that prevents them from flying, how they try to come to terms with the ever-threatening possibility of death, how they bury fallen friends, or how they remember a distant home and especially their loved ones, from whom they hear nothing. But we also follow them in the middle of all sorts of pastimes (in pubs, cinemas, dancing, quizzes, by the sea, on bike and motorcycle trips, on visits to English families, on poaching, etc.) and we watch how they experience love, disappointment and various seemingly banal worries (for example how to get petrol for their cars, how to get an exemption from the king so one doesn't have to shave, how to organize the slaughter

of a pig in England, how to kiss a young lady under the mistletoe at Christmas, how to teach local people to eat wild mushrooms or how to make them laugh.) At the same time, Fajtl and Jánský are in England as foreigners - surprised by many things and unable to comprehend others. They thus portray a special foreigner's insights into local wartime British culture.

In a number of reminiscences, they return to several formative moments from their escape from Czechoslovakia, to the circumstances under which they came to Britain, their experiences first in France during the first year of the war and then in Britain. These include the bombing of London during the blitz, the massacres of French civilians, the seemingly hopelessness at the beginning of the Battle of Britain and their first successes. This first part, covering the longest period of the film, culminates in considering whether to try their luck on the Eastern Front.

## 2. Intermezzo: Mediterranean and the Middle East

The journey to the USSR for both led first by ship across the Mediterranean to Cairo and then through Israel to the Middle East. Fajtl got to Russia partly by plane, Jánský travelled the final part by train. This short exotic intermezzo, especially during a long sea voyage, represents an opportunity for both the airmen (and with them the spectator) a short period of contemplation. In addition, Fajtl's passage through the Strait of Gibraltar is associated with his two year earlier experience when he was shot down in the north of France, found himself on the run, and under very adventurous circumstances, returned to Britain via Paris, the Pyrenees and a Barcelona Prison.

## 3. Eastern Front

Instead of whiskey - vodka, instead of English breakfast - smoked fish, instead of Spitfires and Wellingtons - Lavochkins and Iljushin, instead of Churchill - Stalin, but the essential remains the same: the war must be brought to a successful end. The Germans must now above all, be expelled from their still occupied homeland - Czechoslovakia is already so close. When Fajtl finally finds himself on Slovak soil, to command pilots supporting the Slovak National Uprising, he cannot hide his emotion. He breathes the air from the forests around the improvised Zolná airport and after years he gets the bread of his childhood again, he simply feels at home. But the uprising is met with resistance, the Nazis are still able to recover and go on the counterattack. Under dramatic circumstances and extremely unfavourable weather, Fajtl has to fly over the Tatras and retreat to Poland. Jánský works, runs after the girls and tries to understand the broad Russian soul, which he only partially succeeds in doing. Most importantly, he continues to fight tirelessly. Just three weeks before the end of the war, after a few heavy strikes and an emergency landing, he narrowly escapes death. He is wounded and loses consciousness, wakes up in the hospital, where he gradually recovers. And most of all, he regrets that he has missed a date with a girl! Of course, he also looks forward to the end of the war. After

all these years, the end is finally approaching. For him and Fajtl, it is the cause of great joy. They celebrate properly with villagers, sing and shoot in the air so wildly that it looks like a firework display. They are already looking forward to Prague. At the Prague airport in Kbely, they are greeted by enthusiastic crowds, and in the Old Town Square it is no different: "Laughing girls chanting vehemently and tirelessly from the open windows: 'Long live our pilots!' We can't keep up. 'Long live our girls!'" Everything seems so promising ...





#### 4. Epilogue: Mírov and Prague

*(Once the communists take over Czechoslovakia in 1948 anyone who served abroad during the war is treated as suspicious and the majority who fought with the RAF are thrown in prisons or the Uranium mines.)*

A very short, chilling look into the prison in Mírov, where Fajtl is serving his sentence, and into the grey, cloudy Prague of the 1950s, through which Jánský is running. Surprisingly, neither of them is bitter and neither of them loses their sense of humour - only that it is now a very dark humour. This epilogue is intentionally brief and brutal – the obscenity of their suffering to a second totalitarian regime should be clear without any over sentimentality.

#### II. Our Protagonists: František Fajtl and Filip Jánský

The basic strength of the film lies beyond any doubt in the personalities of its two main protagonists and narrators. Fajtl and Jánský were two sympathetic, intelligent and receptive young men. They are honest while not taking themselves too seriously. This is absolutely crucial for the film. The purpose here is not to present their biographies, but to show how they are genuine filmic characters and especially how their characteristics differ and complement each other appropriately.



**František Fajtl** was first of all a gentleman - this often-overused word is entirely appropriate in his case. Fajtl was an extremely kind, humble and generous man. He was naturally tactful, polite, empathetic and friendly. Always willing to help others, always loyal, always listening. Most of the time he was mild and reserved, but when he encountered some injustice, he became incensed. (This portrayal is how others who knew him remember him, and his books breathe the same values.)

He never complained about anything and always managed to show gratitude. Especially in England, but also in the USSR, he was able to adapt quickly and willingly to local mores. He simply accepted everything as it came and did not speculate wildly about the alternatives. It seemed barren and unworthy of a real man. He stood firmly on the ground as one would expect of someone who grew up in a small farming family in a village. He always had a strong connection to his home - during the war he continuously thought about his parents and siblings and, of course, was worried about whether the Nazis were persecuting them for him going abroad.

In addition to his family and home region, he had a devoted relationship with President Masaryk's pre-war Czechoslovakia. He took the state for granted, and therefore perceived Hitler's aggression as a personal affront. He didn't doubt for a second that the country needed to be defended. It was inevitable that he had to go abroad and fight. He was not able to stand idly by - his patriotism, military honour and, perhaps slightly unhealthy desire for revenge prevented him from doing so. In his battles he often showed extraordinary courage, and although he never belonged to the fighter "aces", he rightly ranks among the greatest legends of the Czechoslovak Air Force.

It is clear from his books that friendship was an absolutely fundamental value in his life, that he literally breathed for his friends. During the war he loved having fun with his comrades and participate in their escapades on the ground (for example, he certainly took part in expeditions for girls or friendly brawls, although he was a little more reserved in this compared to many of his fellow fighters.). He simply loved life and liked to laugh. He often appears in photographs with a kind smile, sometimes beaming from ear to ear.

Of course, he was not perfect. He was not always tough enough for the people around him, sometimes he was too empathetic and too loyal. Here and there he also fell into various illusions, for example, he did not recognize the post war "people's democratic" threat in time, unlike many other pilots, and even unsuccessfully applied to the Communist Party (but it did not save him from Mírov Prison). This though, of course, doesn't change the fact that he was a man who was a rarity in his overall honesty and behaviour.



**Filip Jánský** (real name Richard Husmann) was a born troublemaker. Always alive, restless, provocative. Wherever he went there were problems. In addition, he was really smart, quick witted and capable of finding surprising solutions. And infinitely charismatic and fun to be with.

He came to England under quite adventurous circumstances at the age of just seventeen. He didn't hesitate to falsify his age during military recruitment. Improvisation was not a problem for him, he had been used to it since childhood. His family fell apart and he grew up with his father in quite miserable conditions. Very soon, he had had to fend for himself: collecting tennis balls, working with horses, working as a lifeguard. More important than school for him as a child was the scout group – providing trips to nature and meeting girls (this interest did not leave him in the future.)

He was direct, liked to talk loudly and cause a commotion. He was a solitaire, a joker, a loose cannon. He bragged here and there and was a "dreamer". Although he dealt internally with fear and did not consider himself a hero, he didn't hesitate to take risks. Sometimes the risks were crazy - he often boarded a plane without a parachute and without permission took part in flights on which he had not been sent. Probably that is why he once said to his superior: "I'm no longer afraid of anything, Major, apart from myself - that I won't do something stupid." But at crucial moments, he was always able to remain calm and, as a shooter, excelled on numerous occasions. The entire bomber crew, unlike fighters who could manoeuvre differently in the sky, had to keep a pre-set course above the target of a raid, while withstanding persistent anti-aircraft fire. This required a Zenlike balance. And Jánský was able to perform in such moments.

When he returned from a flight, he looked for ways to blow off steam. Sometimes he fought in a pub, sometimes he poached and then prepared his favourite dishes for his friends, other times he looked for a love affair. He did not have such a respectful relationship with the English as Fajtl - he respected their sense of fair play a great deal, but it did not hesitate him to swindle them when stealing gasoline. However, the scout shaped him more than it might seem at first glance. He was a rough diamond, but at heart he was kind. He was not able to behave selfishly in extreme situations. In brawls he often defended those picked upon with great determination and took many blows in return. Although he had a great problem with authority and discipline, he never dodged service in the air and repeatedly showed extraordinary dedication. Not long before the end of the war, it nearly cost him his life, but he did not expect any honours in return, much less rewards, whether in this world or in the next. He just wanted to be himself.

After the war he stayed the same, left the army, tried to study law for a while. Of course, he didn't learn to obey and didn't do what was expected of him. Unlike Fajtl, he avoided the communist jails, but he had to survive in various inferior professions, endure petty persecution and all sorts of humiliations. Even so, he continued to open his mouth and, for example, on the threshold of the Prague Spring, published a bold and irreconcilable critique of communist injustice in *Literární noviny* that shocked most readers. It is this uncompromisingness and the need to "talk straight" in all circumstances that is key to his persona in the film.



**Fajtl and Jánský** are complementary for our film, each bringing a special perspective to their experiences and each their own distinctive human tone. They are "thoroughbred" filmic characters.

Both can help to arouse thoughts in today's audience on war itself and meditations on masculinity, living in the moment, and how one behaves in a time of conflict. Key to such ruminations is again the honesty of the speaker to himself - trying not to be seen in a better light, their willingness to admit their own fears, doubts and openness to their own failures and mistakes. Fajtl and Jánský were capable of that – for example Jánský at the last moment refuses a medal for bravery. The sergeant asks him why and Jánský replies without hesitation: "I'm not brave. I'm afraid."

They perceived the war itself as a terrible necessity and they wanted to play their part in it to the full. Fajtl himself eloquently writes, "Sometimes I hear the chirping of enemy bullets on the back of the wings of my hurricane, but what is it against what he could catch from us, from our twenty-four machine guns? We're flying over Cambridge. The university district is just 400 meters below us. A venerable professor of philosophy and their students probably look up at us. Will their brief lesson confirm their theory on the futility of war? Or will their patriotism prevail over it? The three of us in the hurricanes have already solved this problem in our own way." The film though will not shy away from the pitfalls of this approach - Jánský sometimes showed a strong "retributive sentiment". Simply put, they did not want to just slap the other cheek of the Nazis, but rather wanted to "stick an even bigger slap on them than they got." Such excesses only help to show them as rounded human beings and help the audience to appreciate the emotions and attitudes that often led to attitudes of retribution on a national level.

They though believed in something similar to Thomas Aquinas "just good war," justified initially by the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia and then their experiences of Nazism during the war. An illustration of this moral righteousness can be seen from Fajtl, when he writes an indignant letter of what he saw in June 1940 in France to the famous American pilot Charles Lindbergh, with whom he had personally met before the war, but whose later coquetry with Nazism disgusted him. "We were near to a receding frightened crowd of civilians - women, the elderly and children. Communications to the south, which in the eyes of the French meant salvation, were blocked. The experience never disappears from my memory! Innocent, unarmed people, civilians - the 'knights' of the Luftwaffe mercilessly mowed them down with their machine guns, cannons and bombs. Even the most heartless would have to be ashamed of such a barbaric act. You, Mr. Lindbergh, can approve of such a thing?"



### III. Environment: The Western and Eastern Fronts of World War II

Fajtl and Jánšký are among the few pilots who, during their wartime "career", looked first to France, then to Great Britain and finally to the Soviet Union, Poland and Slovakia. What's more, that without knowing each other, they moved across the world virtually at the same time. This fact offers a relatively unique opportunity to go quite naturally to both the Western and Eastern fronts in the film and show the differences in experiencing (not only) war in the different countries. The dominant factor here will be the contrast between life in the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union (and in the territories under its control.). Parallels in the use of text and images that were in the British section of the film will appear in the Russian section to mirror the effect the experiences had on the airmen.

Both pilots were dazzled by England from the first moment after the bitter French experience. But they also realized that they were complete outsiders. If even today many Brits confuse the Czechs with the Chechens, the ignorance then was far more striking. But it didn't bother anyone that much. For example, Fajtl recalls how, after landing in the port of Liverpool, he received a warm welcome from the locals: "The welcoming English were surprised by the foreign language. One in the front dared to ask, 'Are you French, Belgian or what ?!' 'We are from Czechoslovakia - we are from Czechoslovakia.' 'Good old Czechs,' one Brit surprisingly shouted correctly. The greeting slogan spread in the crowd like an infection. They all shouted, 'Long live the good, old Czechs', although the vast majority barely knew where the land of these foreigners lay. But the pleasure gripped both sides. "

From that moment on, the British did not cease to fascinate Fajtl and Jánšký. Especially with their stoic calm and certain emotional rigidity but also with their perseverance, steadfastness and utter aversion to any whining. Last but not least, they loved the British sense of humour, which, according to Fajtl, differed surprisingly little from Czech humour. And even though Jánšký did not hesitate to fight when someone in drunkenness called him a "fucking Czech", he could only praise the prevailing spirit of English pubs: "Darts are thrown at targets, people sit down at tables, even if they do not know each other, not like in our country. Someone plays the piano and everyone sings heartily." Fajtl never ceased to admire how the British didn't let themselves be flustered, how perfectly disciplined they were, and how they accepted all the horrors of the bombing almost as if it were just another April shower. There are many such observations in his (and partly also in Jánšký's texts) and in the film we will undoubtedly work with a few of them. But in principle England was, for them, a country to which they were grateful for much, and in which they loved to live. This was despite the fact that the English did not have such an understanding, for example, about their poaching, which they did persistently as they did not like the food in the army canteens, or for their theft of gasoline fuel. On the other hand, the English did not understand wild mushrooms and were afraid of them which was completely incomprehensible to the Czech pilots.

Despite all the longing for home, Fajtl and Jánský sincerely fell in love with the English landscape, the spirit of the local towns and villages and, of course, the local girls. This should be imprinted in the film subtly through a series of observational sequences. Equally should come across their natural respect for the Churchillian spirit, which was literally permeating the country at the time. Even when Fajtl and one of his friends were courting two young women at the bar in vain, they achieved the desired success only when one of the girls found out they were pilots. Referring to Churchill's memorable words ("Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."), she turned to her friend: "Look June, two of the few."

As far as the Eastern Front is concerned, the situation is partly complicated by the fact that Fajtl's and Jánský's texts were published before 1989, and therefore, with a few exceptions, they lack virtually any critical tone. They were open young men who sincerely admired much of what they encountered on the Eastern Front - especially the Soviet war effort and admirable resilience (both are, after all, difficult to attack even from today's point of view). Moreover, the very description of what they encountered on the Eastern Front is sometimes so eloquent that there is no need to speculate too much about possible censorship.





Both Fajtl and Jánský were empathetic towards the Soviets, unjudgementally observing. Much they liked – there was a clear sense of urgency in their attitude to the war, then there was their generosity and Eastern passion. On the other hand there was, compared to the West, a much lower value to human life. The daily experience with the "broad Russian soul" was remarkable for both, especially Fajtl, who fondly remembered long evenings and nights with vodka and fish, exciting celebrations and the pervasive feeling of (Slavic) brotherhood.

After moving to Slovakia (Fajtl's case) or Poland (Jánský's case), one new important element enters the film - the knowledge that they are at home again or at least close to home. This stands out in the film especially in the case of Fajtl, who was a devoted Czechoslovak and considered Slovaks quite naturally as his brothers. After years spent abroad, he found himself in his element again, which he also gladly reflected on. And at certain moments he felt quite ordinary, for example, when he could finally walk through the wooded Central European landscape, which he missed so much. In a similar vein, he recalls, for example, the moment when the Czechoslovak flag was hoisted on a meadow in the middle of dense forests at Zolná Airport: "It took a fraction of a second, but it passed through my whole body like an electric shock of immense intensity." It was similar when he heard the locals singing folk songs, or when he met them by the fire over a beer and roasted mutton. Such seemingly small details will be very important to us in the whole film narrative.

As well as the Western and Eastern Fronts, the film will look into the Mediterranean and the Middle East in a small interlude. In addition to the already mentioned calming influence it offers the film, through the exotic environments it will evoke a feeling of how bizarre the war itself could be - the special places it was able to drag a person and under such strange circumstances (everything important in this regard is concentrated in the scene where Fajtl, on a ship, passes Malta and thinks about what it would be like to return there in peacetime and just swim and lie on the beaches.)

The last film environment is the short epilogue in the Mírov Prison and the grey Prague of the 1950s. The depressive feel of these locations is self-explanatory.

#### **IV: Archive, music and editing in brief**

The following lines explain briefly how we will select archive footage for the film and their relationship to the airmen's speech, how we intend to work with sound and music, how we will adjust the authentic speeches taken from Fajtl and Jánský texts and, last but not least, how we will direct the actors who will recreate the voices of the airmen. The included teaser also provides some help in appreciating how the final film will look and feel.

Our aim is to stay truthful to the personality of František Fajtl and Filip Jánský and their perception of the world. The film should flow calmly most of the time, sometimes even hypnotically. However at certain moments, it will pick up a neurotic, emotionally captivating tempo. Working with the editor Šimon Špidla, who has considerable experience on archive films, will hugely help in achieving this varied pace. The further challenge is how to juxtapose the archive material with the spoken word. We certainly do not plan to purely provide illustration for the spoken sentences although appreciate that at sometimes such an approach will be correct. It is important to be able to change the mode of film narration, and thus regularly surprise the viewer. If, for example, the image, speech and music at an appropriate moment evoke completely opposing emotions, something unexpected may arise from this combination and the viewer may realize something he would not have been able to realize otherwise. Undoubtedly, it will be even more desirable than normal to follow the advice of Jean-Luc Godard and see all the shots in the editing room first without sound (many of them after all do not have any sound.)

Conceptual work with a soundtrack is also crucial for this type of film. Much of the footage, which we will work with is mute, the sound quality of many other materials is problematic. With such material the importance of the overall "sound design" will be even more important than usual to the finished film. In cooperation with the experienced and always resourceful sound director Vaclav Flegl, we will be looking for ways for the soundtrack to sensitively exist beside the inner voices of the airmen, music and silence, providing a certain necessary rawness. With different types of noise (i.e. shooting, explosions, wind, waves, crowded English pub, abandoned Slovak forest, etc) we intend to bring in evocative sounds while never trying to simply fill in the missing sounds from the archive. We will work with strong sound contrasts so that at certain moments in the film, the viewer feels the war and its horror almost physically after a much softer period has let the viewer be lulled by the flowing life outside the airbase. As is the case with sudden bombing, war often breaks into the film unexpectedly and bestially. It is important to mention we do not make a film for military-historical fetishists and will not try to copy the sound of precise weapons. We are more concerned with sound-dramaturgical meanings, where, for example, the sound of an explosion can play a significant rhythmic role that strengthens the poetic quality of a sequence.



As for the music, we are collaborating with the Slovak composer Dalibor Kocián, who performs under the stage name Stroon. Dalibor has an extraordinary feeling for film atmosphere, a highly developed musical-dramaturgical thinking and, perhaps most importantly, he can hide his artistic ego in the interest of the work itself.

Dalibor and I have spent considerable time thinking about the overall sound concept and agree that the music in the film must not function as a mere subplot, nor can it be overused to heighten existing emotions - let alone tell the viewer what to feel. As in the case of the montage, it will be necessary to play with music sometimes illustrative manner and at other times intentionally going against the mood of the image or dialogue – shaking the viewer to think in a different manner.

As for the basic character of the music, it should be somewhere on the border between abstract electronics, contemporary classical music and the sounds of contemporary jazz, as well as popular and folk music. So far, we have come up with a concept that is not only relatively original, but also functional and dramaturgically justified. Because the vast majority of music played to our protagonists would have been from the radio and was vocal music, which they danced to in bars or which they sang themselves at bases or around camps fires, we would like to work with a four-member choir supplemented only by a triangle, base and electronic instrumentation. The four human voices should also become a specific kind of instrument. The sounds of period hits such as Roll Out the Barrels will be recognizable but they will become part of a wider - and hopefully even emotionally deeper - sound. Finally, there's probably no need to stress that no matter how important the music is, there often has to be complete silence – there is no more powerful sound than silence.

Sensitive work with selected passages from Fajtl's and Jánský's texts will be prepared in collaboration with co-writer Marek Šindelka, a leading Czech writer, with an extraordinary developed feeling for language. The goal will be to translate book language into conversational speech so that it sounds as natural as possible. The intention here is simply to have two young men speaking through Fajtl and Jánský – the language should neither feel dated nor modern – simply authentic and believable to the viewer. Nothing more and nothing less.

Closely related to this is the importance of choosing the right actors (note voices will be different from those in the English teaser.) The actors' performances must be highly nuanced in order to give the effect of an inner diary. Yes, there will be moments of emotion but they must be able to control it and easily return to a composed, thoughtful voice. This is both about casting and directing in the sound studio.

A final note is just to stress that we have researchers supporting us in scouring archives across Europe - gathering material painstakingly from Czech, Slovak and from archives and museums from all over the continent - to provide a rich visual imagery, that compliments the text we have from the airmen that covers such large areas of war-torn Europe.



## Team

### Director and co-writer

**Tomáš Bojar** is a highly respected documentarist and writer. He is best known for his award-winning documentary films Česká RApublika (Gold Kingfisher for Best Documentary Finále Plzeň 2009), Dva nula (Pavel Koutecky prize for best documentary of the year 2013), FC Roma (best documentary MFDF Jihlava 2016), Mimořádná zpráva (Gold Kingfisher for Best Documentary - Finále Plzeň 2019). He has also worked as a scriptwriter for other documentarists and is the director of the important documentary series on the mentally disabled, Pět statečných for Czech Television. Before working in film, Tomáš graduated from the Charles University first in politics, international relations and law before following this with a doctorate in ethics. The documentary has a personal importance to Tomáš as his grandfather served in the RAF during the war.

### Co-writer

**Marek Šindelka**, poet, novelist and screenwriter. Winner of the Jiří Orten Prize (2006) and two Magnesia Literas for prose (2012, 2017). His books have been published in English, Dutch, Polish, Hungarian and Bulgarian.

### Editor

**Šimon Špidla** has extensive editing experience with top Czech film makers, he also edited the film, Bába, which won the Cinéfondation award at the Cannes Film Festival.

### Composer

**Dalibor Kocian “Stroon”** is a multitalented Slovak musician, composer of film and theatre music devoted to electronic and experimental music.

### Producer

**Gordon Lovitt** is the managing partner at NOW Productions producing successful shows across all genres from documentaries to stand-up comedy. Previously he has been Director of Programming at Česká Televize, and TV Prima and Prima Cool in the Czech Republic and TVR1 in Romania.

## The Production

The film is a coproduction between NOW Productions, KM plus (Czech Republic) and Artichoke (Slovakia) to be completed in spring 2022 and will have a cinematic release in Czech Republic and Slovakia before being broadcast on Czech and Slovak public televisions. It is supported by the Czech Film Fund.



# The Winged Lions

A unique poetic form of archive storytelling made by an award-winning team



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