



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.



Through the airmen's own words

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

The real documentarists, however, are two of the actual airmen.

Young actors' voices recount the airmen's experiences in the form of an inner discourse.

The viewer sees the archive material through the airmen's eyes at the moment they experienced it during the war.

Using purely archive footage including previously unseen material.



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Teaser with English Subtitles

Teaser in English



Structure

The film tells in a linear structure the story of Czechoslovak airmen escaping 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, to live life to the full and the need to do the right thing.

The story will of course cover their battle experience but is as much about two young men trying to survive and understand the countries where they serve.



Form - Narration

The text for the actors will be adapted from books the two airmen wrote after the war.

The airmen were chosen due to the qualities that come out in their literature - observational skills, philosophical and moral outlook but also because of their contrasting personalities and parallel journeys through the war.

Considerable work will be done to keep the truthfulness of the original text while being natural in a spoken form.

One version will be with two young Czech actors but a further international version will be made with English actors.



Form - Archive and editing

In the editing composition, our airmen's thoughts find themselves in juxtaposition with period archive footage and composed music.

Images, sound and music are used to awaken the mind and senses of the viewer rather than purely to illustrate the airmen's words.

While researching the project we found material that has yet to be seen from private archives and most importantly from a Czech director working for the British Crown Film Unit during the war.

This material combined with material from Czech, Slovak and international archives will give us a unique perspective into how it must have been for these young Czechoslovaks fighting for Britain, their motherland and the freedom of Europe only to be betrayed by their own countrymen.



Form - Music and sound

Music will be specially composed and will range from abstract electronics, contemporary classical and jazz to popular and folk music from the period. However, an equally important element will be the use of silence.

Painstaking work will be done on the sound design - creating strong sound contrasts so that at certain moments of the film one feels the reality of war and its horror while moments later one is lulled into the beauty and rhythms that flow from everyday life.



Our Airmen

Lieutenant General František Fajtl –is one of the best-known pilots and one of few to be shot down above Nazi-controlled France, evade capture, and return to UK to fight again.

He served first in France, flew in the Battle of Britain under the RAF, led a group of Czechoslovaks under the patronage of the Soviet Air Force and participated in the Slovak National Uprising.

He was a very modest man and a great observer of people and cultures. He used these observation skills to great effect in the numerous books that he wrote about his experiences in the war.

Richard Husmann- Czech World War II RAF air gunner and author of the book *Riders in the Sky*, that was made into a Czech film in 1968.

He fought in the foreign legion in France before coming to Britain to join the RAF where he was an air gunner throughout the war. His path during the war followed a similar trajectory to Fajtl also fighting alongside other Czechoslovaks helping in the Slovak National Uprising with the Soviet Air Force. He was extremely young when he came to Britain, only 17.

His character was the opposite of Fajtl, impulsive and outgoing – helping to offer the viewer too very different perspectives on events and the individual countries where they served.





Context - Importance of Czechoslovaks in the RAF to the allied success in the second world war

It is a little known fact that a 1/5th of the entire RAF was composed of non-British personnel and the Czechoslovaks were the second largest contingent with over 2500 men and women. With a production rate of 300 airplanes a week, quality pilots were desperately needed. The highly trained Czechoslovak pilots played a major role in the Battle of Britain and throughout the war.

These airmen were terribly young – had left their homes and families to fight in another country. Their stories are fascinating both for their bravery but also their journey as young men across Europe - seeing with fresh eyes life in wartime France, Britain and Russia. The tragedy is that after their heroism they were treated as traitors by the communist government in 1948.



Team

Director and co-writer Tomáš Bojar is a highly respected award winning documentarist and writer.

Co-writer Marek Šindelka, novelist and screenwriter. Two time winner of the Magnezia Litera prize.

Editor Šimon Špidla has extensive editing experience with top Czech film makers, he also edited an award-winning documentary film at Cannes.

Dalibor Kocian "Stroon" is a multitalented Slovak musician, composer of film and theater 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 and its screening

The film is a coproduction between NOW Productions, Artichoke and KM Plus to be completed in early 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 and Slovak Ministry of Defence.

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NOW Productions
nowproductions.cz

