

The usage of the Czechoslovakian armour and air force in the Battle of the Dukla Pass of 1944

The aim of this dissertation is to illustrate how the usage of the Czechoslovakian armour and air force influenced the course of the Battle of the Dukla Pass of 1944. The Author tried to outline the combat operations of the above mentioned units of the First Czechoslovak Army Corps fighting alongside the 38th Army. The author was induced to undertake the subject due to the fact that the presented battles took place in the South-East of today's Poland as well as in the east region of the Slovak State. In 1944, in the south-east region of the Second Republic of Poland (present territory of Poland), the First Czechoslovak Army Corps was employed alongside the Red Army against the Wehrmacht troops and the fostering Royal Hungarian Army defending the Carpathian passes.

Because of the Author's place of residence, the mentioned regions are particularly close to him. The fact that the Author focused on describing the operations of the First Czechoslovak Army Corps was not coincidental as it were the Czechs and Slovaks who were fighting in its rows.

In this thesis, the Author strived to use all the available sources which would describe the subject of the Battle of the Dukla Pass. The collections gathered in the Central Military Archive – Military Historical Archive (cz. Vojenský ústřední archiv - Vojenský historický archiv) served as a valuable source of information. In his work, the Author analyzed extensively a number of studies in Polish, Czech and Slovak. Gathering information about the combat operations of the First Czechoslovak Army Corps in the Battle of the Dukla Pass, the Author also made use of such press items as: „Historie a vojenství”, „Letectví a kosmonautika”, „Nové obzory”, „Wierchy”, „Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny”.

The dissertation consists of seven main chapters, an introduction, conclusion, biography, list of maps, table, names index, geographical names index and an annex.

The first chapter discusses the issues connected with the military and political situation on the Eastern Front during the II World War. In particular sub-chapters, the Author depicted the historical outline of the formation of the Czechoslovakian armed forces in the years 1939 – 1944. He also concentrated on picturing the lives of Czech and Slovak soldiers after the dissolution of the Second Czechoslovak Republic.

The second chapter contains a detailed analysis of the area where the Battle of the Dukla Pass took place. The Author described the geological structure, terrain layout, waters,

flora and transport network during that period. He also presented the German-Hungarian defence taking into account its structure and fortification system.

The next, third chapter, is devoted to the Battle of the Dukla Pass, while the fourth one portrays the combat trail of the First Czechoslovak Army Corps in the Battle of the Dukla Pass which had its beginning on the terrains of today's South-East Poland and ended in the north-east part of the Slovak State. In this chapter, the Author distinguished the most significant battle places which were crucial for the course of the Battle of the Dukla Pass.

The issue of the First Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade which took part in the battle has been presented in chapter five. The Author started with an outline of the history of the formation and development of the Czechoslovak armoured units in USSR and subsequently described the participation of the Czechoslovak troopers in the Battle of the Dukla Pass¹.

The sixth chapter illustrates the history of the Czechoslovak pilots on the territory of the Second Republic of Poland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Subsequently, the Author depicted the combat operations of the First Czechoslovak Fighter Regiment, subordinated to the First Czechoslovak Army Corps which initially, being composed of the Second Air Army, was to take part in the Battle of the Dukla Pass. It was however delegated to the uprising Slovakia where it helped the Slovak insurgents fight the occupying troops of Wehrmacht. This way it was to help the soldiers of the Red Army and the First Czechoslovak Army Corps to get through to the Slovak State.

The last, seventh chapter, consists of an assessment of the Czechoslovak armoured and air units in the presented events and the influence of those operations on the formation of the Czechoslovak armed forces in the years 1945 – 1948.

In the conclusion, the Author summarized his research and offered answers to the questions he had introduced at the beginning of his work. The annex contains the most important documents related to the formation of the Czechoslovak armed forces in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during the II World War and the course of the Battle of the Dukla Pass.

¹ In his dissertation, the Author did not present the combat operations of the motorized battalion of heavy machine guns constituting the First Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade because he only concentrated on presenting the use of the armour .