

## Austrian exiles as commando soldiers in the British forces

### Short digital biographies and database on refugees from Austria in No. 3 Troop, No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando during World War II

*In British uniforms and sometimes behind enemy lines, refugees from Austria took part in special operations against the Nazi regime. Recently declassified documents enable a systematic look at the biographies of these previously unknown commando soldiers for the first time.*

Great Britain was one of the most important places of refuge for Austrians who were forced into exile by the National Socialist terror regime. For various reasons, many of them wanted to contribute to Britain's war effort against Hitler's Germany during the Second World War. However, as so-called "enemy aliens", they were not particularly trusted by their host country and initially only allowed to serve – after being interned for security reasons in many cases – in the Pioneer Corps. This was a purely auxiliary outfit whose members only carried out work assignments and were not issued with weapons. It was not until 1943 that the – male – refugees were able to join almost all units of the British Army.

A small number of Austrian emigrants, however, had taken a special route to fight against the National Socialists. With No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, the British set up a unit of finally around 1000 men to give exiles from various countries the opportunity to take part in raids and special operations. This outfit consisted of three Belgian and two French detachments as well as one Dutch, one Norwegian, one Polish Yugoslav and one "British" contingent. The latter, also known as No. 3 (Miscellaneous) Troop, was actually made up almost exclusively of Germans and Austrians who had fled their home country and were recruited from the Pioneer Corps after thorough security checks. For understandable reasons, their true origins were concealed, so that their members were given aliases and fake family histories – which often caused confusion among other British soldiers they encountered in action due to their often strong accents.

As part of this project, all the names and basic biographical data of around 40 Austrian commando soldiers, some of whom carried out spectacular missions, will be researched and documented in a database. In addition, short biographies and a contextualizing essay on the emigration, recruitment and wartime deployment of the individuals concerned will be compiled. The research results will be published in German and English on the BIK website and will be freely accessible.

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