



Czechoslovak Women in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF)

Československé ženy ve Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF)

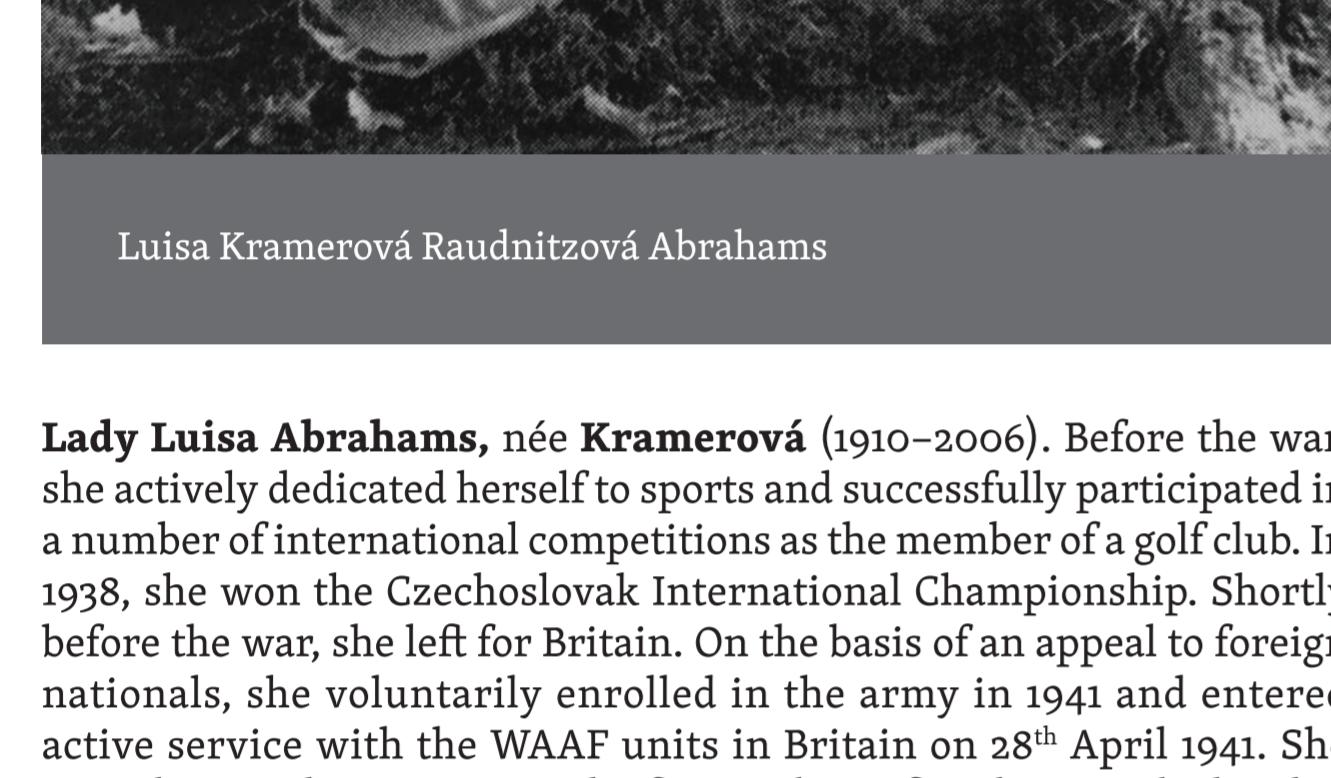
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At the end of the 1930's, the British War Office began to implement previously developed plans for reinforcing British defenses due to fears concerning the start of another military conflict. One of these points was to reinstate the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). Detachments were activated on 28th June 1939 and were soon incorporated into the British Air Force. After two years of successful operation, British authorities awarded WAAF members the status of members of the armed forces and gave them the same rank as men. During the war, they served in Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa or the Far East and their number rose to as many as 180,000 individuals half way through the war.

The volunteers occupied a range of professions in the Air Force: they worked in offices, kitchens, workshops, stockrooms and hospitals. They worked as drivers for many types of vehicles or as operators for a wide range of modern equipment in the departments of photography, meteorology, mapping and codebreaking. They were also integrated into anti-aircraft defense and were able to replace men who left for combat units in war areas without serious problem.

As of the second half of 1941, female foreign nationals also found employment in the WAAF detachments. More than 160 women from former Czechoslovakia or foreign wives of Czechoslovak soldiers worked there among women from Belgium, Germany, Palestine, Greece and elsewhere.

As of 1941, the pertinent authorities were already discussing the possibility of creating an independent female Czechoslovak unit within the national foreign armed forces, but, in the end, they did not recommend its formation for various reasons. After an arrangement with the British, they agreed to let them remain in the WAAF. The service of female volunteers from Czechoslovakia has thus become part of British military tradition, while it still has not been fully appreciated in the volunteers' native country.



Luisa Kramerová Raudnitzová Abrahams
Lady Luisa Abrahams, née Kramerová (1910–2006). Before the war, she actively dedicated herself to sports and successfully participated in a number of international competitions as the member of a golf club. In 1939, she was a Czechoslovak citizen in Canada, but her family's safety required her to leave for Britain. On the basis of an appeal to foreign nationals, she voluntarily enrolled in the army in 1941 and entered active service with the WAAF units in Britain on 28th April 1941. She served as a radio operator and office worker. After the war, she lived in Britain. She devoted herself to her family, business, charitable activities and golf. In January 1970, she and her husband were conferred titles of nobility. She died in London.

Lady Abrahams Luisa, dívčím jménem Kramerová (1910–2006). Před válkou se aktivně věnovala sportu a úspěšně se zúčastnila mezinárodních soutěží v golfu. V roce 1938 vydala mezinárodní mistrovství Českoslovácka. Krátce před válkou odjela do Británie. Na základě výzvy k cizím státním příslušníkům se začátkem roku 1941 dobrovolně přihlásila do armády a 28. dubna 1941 nastoupila činnou službu u jednotek WAAF v Británii. Sloužila jako spojkařka a kancelářská sila. Po válce žila v Británii. Věnovala se rodině, obchodu, charitativní činnosti a golfu. V lednu 1970 byla s manželem povyšena do šlechtického stavu. Zemřela v Londýně.



Tondervová Ascherová Jirina – Národní archiv, Policieři ředitelství Praha – všeobecná spisovna 1941–1950, sign. T 167/17, karta 1066

Jirina Tondervová, née Ascherová (1919–2009). A keen sportswoman and exceptional skier, Jirina was competing in ski tournaments when Hitler invaded. This was lucky as her father was Jewish. She made her way to England and worked as a journalist for the Jew, in exile, until an obituary of Ivo Tondra, with whom she had just fallen in love, was placed on her desk, prompting her to join the WRAF. On completing racing training she joined the Isle of Man, in Aberdeen, Sopley, Haste and then Oxford. Her obituary appeared in the English press in 1945, they married and returned to Prague. She then bought a farm above Marienbad. However, pressure from the Communist party followed them, and after the February coup it was clear that they would have to leave the country again. Unfortunately Jirina was expecting their second child, delayed departure until after the birth, and the escape attempt failed. Many more attempts were made. Eventually they had to escape separately, and from England they succeeded in arranging for the children to be smuggled out. In June 1951 the family was reunited in London.

Tondervová Jirina, dívčím jménem Ascherová (1919–2009). Pracovala jako učitelka gymnastiky. Ve věhlasné čase se věnovala sportu a ve sjezdovém lyžování nekolikrát reprezentovala svéj vlasti na mezinárodních mistrovstvích v zahraničí. Německá okupace ji zastihla na závodech ve Švýcarsku, kde se vystavovala výkonnostem českých žen. Zde se však musela vrátit do vlasti. Po válce se vydala do Anglie, kde posléze pracovala jako sociální pracnice v novinářské redakci. Odvolu do jednotek WAAF se dobrovolně podrobila v srpnu 1942 a činnou službu nastoupila 16. září téhož roku. Absolvovala výcvik pro rádiovou operátorku a postupně sloužila na leteckých základnách na ostrově Man, v Aberdeenu, Sopley, Hastingsu a nakonec v Dundee. Demobilizovala 18. října 1945. Vrátila se za vynikajícího letece Ivo Tondra a žila v Praze. Po změně politického režimu v Československu během roku 1948 se dětmi třikrát pokusila ilegálně opustit republiku. Dvakrát byla zadržena, souzena a vězněna. Tepřve třetí pokus v roce 1951 se stal úspěšným. Poté žila s rodinou v Británii.