

Lidice Plaque

Martyn Webster

The main photo here taken from a contemporary edition of the Dover Express was taken on 23rd September 1969 and shows the Mayor of the town of Lidice in the then Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic), Mme. Maria Yarosova in presence of Dover's Mayor Alderman William T. Muge, and also, out of the picture, of the then Czech Ambassador to the U.K., Dr. Miroslav Ruzek. This was at a rose garden area adjacent to the Riverside Centre that was specifically dedicated in 1967 by the council to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the mining town of Lidice's destruction and martyrdom of all male inhabitants by occupying Second World War enemy troops. An action which inspired worldwide revulsion and condemnation and subsequent memorialisation in many places at home and abroad. Particular attention was paid in the UK by the National Union of Mineworkers, as well as the Rotary Club, and locally by the NUM area secretary Jack Dunn, who, at the unveiling presented Mme. Yarosova with a sheaf of red roses. It is believed the garden and plaque were originally inspired by Dover Alderman John Hadden, who was/had been himself a coalminer. Lidice itself has a significant memorial in a large rose garden. Mme. Yarosova is seen pulling a cord releasing a tricolour flag covering the plaque which was made of copper. The wording of the plaque was thus: "This small garden was planted in 1967 as a local contribution to the international recognition then given to the 25th anniversary of the destruction of the mining village of Lidice in June 1942 and to those high qualities of flesh, mind and spirit exemplified in the rebirth of Lidice and the great international rose garden planted there". Unfortunately, at a time

and date so far unknown the copper plaque disappeared, although the fixing position may still be seen. Equally unfortunately the rose garden has now been concreted over! The question now remains as to whether there is any mood and/or funds to replace this plaque in the time we now all live in.

Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and acting Reichsprotektor Kurt Daluege ordered the complete destruction of Lidice and massacre of the inhabitants in reprisal for the assassination of Reich Protector Heydrich. All 173 men from the village aged 15 years or older were killed on 10th June 1942. A further 9 men, not present at the time, were arrested and executed soon afterwards along with 8 men, 7 women already under arrest and two boys recently turned 15. Most of the 203 women and 105 children were sent to a makeshift detention centre in a Kladno school; then the women were deported to concentration camps. 9 children, considered racially suitable for Germanisation, were handed over to German families and 82 sent to Chełmno where they were gassed to death. It is one of the most documented instances of German war crimes during the Second World War.

Editor



Lidice Plaque Unveiling