

Major-General Miloslav Kaspar, who has died aged 95, fought with Czechoslovak forces in eastern Europe and France during the Second World War, and was responsible for choosing the team which assassinated Reinhard Heydrich, the SS governor of Prague in 1942; after the war he served as an intelligence officer with Deuxième Bureau and MI5.

In March 1939 Kaspar was with his first regiment in the Slovak capital of Bratislava when the Wehrmacht marched in to proclaim the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia a German protectorate. Setting out immediately for Warsaw, he joined a Polish military intelligence unit which sent him on a training course. Three weeks later he was smuggled into Prague to command a Czech unit spying on the enemy.

On April 20 he produced a report on the troops and heavy armour in a parade to celebrate Hitler's birthday. He wrote it on wet paper, so that the message became invisible when it dried, and accompanied it with an innocuous note.

When his brother Pepa, an engineer, told him details of the Soviet-German pact which he had overheard while checking phone lines, Kaspar immediately led his comrades back to Poland. There they joined the Czechoslovak Legion, formed by Lieutenant-Colonel Ludvik Svoboda, and were captured by the Russians invading from the east as the Germans poured in from the west. Kaspar found himself moved to a series of Soviet prison camps previously occupied by Poles, whose graffiti ominously stopped in March 1940 (when the Russians carried out the Katyn massacre).

On being released when Russian-German relations deteriorated, he and his companions were sent to the Crimea, deloused, and dispatched to France to take part in the fighting at Coulommiers on the Marne. But they were forced to retreat south.

On coming to a badly bombed bridge over the Loire, Kaspar organised his men to carry across munitions and gun parts under fire, for which he was awarded the Croix de Guerre. When he reached the sea, the sight of Admiral Somerville's fleet departing to challenge the French at Mers-el-

Kebir convinced him for the first time that victory was possible.

After the French surrender, Kaspar arrived in Britain, becoming an interpreter and instructor to the London Scottish and the South Staffords. As an intelligence officer with the Czechoslovak Legion he also helped to choose the team to assassinate the German governor Reinhard Heydrich in Prague in 1942. It was while stationed near Royal Leamington Spa that he met Paulette Pegg, the daughter of a Ministry of Health inspector, whom he married in 1944.

After escorting the exiled Czechoslovak government in London to Slovakia via the Black Sea early the following year, Kaspar was given a battalion for the 300-mile advance on Prague; he took the town of Vsetin, earning a Medal for Valour, and helped the Romanians fight off a German attack on a village under the Tatra mountains, for which he was appointed a knight of the Royal Order of the Star of Romania.

His brother Tonda, who was in a Prague prison, was taunted by guards who told him that there was no chance of Miloslav riding to his rescue on a white horse – so he was delighted to hear that Mila had appeared in Prague on a grey. But their elder brother Pepa was captured bringing ammunition to the barricades on the streets, and killed by SS men in front of his wife and daughter.

When the ceasefire was established Kaspar helped to transfer the Sudeten Germans back to Germany, then studied at the Czechoslovak military war academy for a year before becoming professor of tactics at the staff college. When the communists took over in February 1948, however, he was sacked. He quickly dispatched his wife back to England, and crossed the mountains into Bavaria the next night.

The son of a local official, Miloslav Frantisek Kaspar was born in Prague on February 12 1914 and went to the Realka grammar school. An excellent football player, he was offered a contract by Sparta, but he elected instead to go to the army officers' college at Hranice in Moravia. He found time to visit the Folies Bergère in Paris, where he saw both Maurice Chevalier and Josephine Baker, whose banana striptease became one of his party tricks in later life. But he also earned

sufficiently high marks to be able to choose his regiment, the 39th Infantry.

After leaving Czechoslovakia in 1948, Kaspar joined his wife in Britain, where he accepted an invitation from the wartime Czechoslovak defence minister, Sergej Ingr, to continue in military intelligence. He worked first for Deuxième Bureau in Paris and Innsbruck, where he was involved in running agents behind the Iron Curtain, then moved to MI5 in Cyprus before going to Beirut, where he called himself Miles Kingdon of Skyways Airways.

On returning to Britain, Kaspar became an export manager for Ranco, a refrigeration company, and then Anglo-Nordic, which sold central heating. When he retired in 1978 he became chairman and then president of the Association of Czechoslovak Legionnaires Abroad, editing its magazine *Osvobozeni* (Liberation).

As the Soviet Union crumbled in the 1980s he wrote, with Josef Bursik (a Czech hero of the Soviet Union who had fought with the Russians during the war), an open letter to President Gorbachev asking for the return of Carpatho-Ruthenia, which Stalin had annexed. Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, thanked them, but there was no Soviet response.

When the Communist regime in Prague fell with the Velvet Revolution, Kaspar was offered promotion to the rank of major-general.

He turned it down because it came from a defence minister who was a former communist, but accepted the offer when it was renewed by President Havel.

Returning to Prague after almost 50 years, he found few relations and a country greatly changed by communist rule. He spent his last years in Surrey and Oxfordshire.

Mila Kaspar, who died on November 4, is survived by his wife and three sons.