

Aba Bardicev was born on 25 April 1920 in Galati, Romania to Mordechai and Naomi Susie Bardicev. The family were descendants of the well-known Hassidic family of Rebbe of Berdychiv.

From childhood Aba had a deep love for Israel and was proud of his Judaism. During his studies at elementary school he vigorously defended his Jewish friends and he was respected by his friends and non-Jews. As a teenager he joined the youth movement in Romania and after graduating from high school he went to Bucharest to work at the movements centre. Planning a life in Israel, Aba joined a training farm in Floriaska and worked there until October 1940, when a pro-Nazi party came into power in Romania and ordered that all training farms to be closed.

Aba decided to leave Romania and paid a large price to travel to Israel on the ship 'Darien II', a voyage that lasted over four months. As the ship approached the shores it was captured by the British and all aboard were imprisoned as illegal immigrants for a year and a half in the Atlit Detainee camp near Acre. After being released, Bardichev underwent further agricultural training on Kibbutz Geva and later at Ashdot Yaakov.

In November 1943, he volunteered to be part of a group of paratroopers that the British would drop behind enemy lines in Nazi-occupied Europe. The group was put under a course of training conducted by the British army in Ramat David and then in Egypt.

On March 15, 1944, Aba was dropped into Yugoslavia along with Hannah Szenes, Reuven Dafni and Yona Rosen, and he was given false British identity papers under the name 'Sergeant Robert Willis' and the code names Leon, Arnold, Anticlimax and more.

They were tasked with penetrating the Romanian homeland and to help Romanian Jews in their struggle for existence. The British also tasked him with gathering intelligence and attempting to rescue airmen who were captured in Romania. He acted as a wireless operator in the Papuk Mountains but was unable to reach his goal. So, he returned to Bari with the aim of being released but he chose in August 1944 to look for other ways to reach his destination. In September 1944, an American plane "Flying Fortress" was brought in, bringing military equipment to Slovakia, to the rebel enclave of the central government that was an ally of Nazi Germany. At the Teri Dubi airport, near the town of Banska Bystrica, the centre of the uprising, he met the paratroopers Haviva Reik, Zvi Ben-Yaakov, Chaim Hermesh and Rafael Reiss, who brought them alternative transmitters.

While waiting to cross the border, Aba worked with his comrades to assist the Jewish refugees who were concentrated in the enclave area and with the British delegation there as part of 'Operation Duo' to rescue air crews. As the suppression of the Slovak uprising began by the Germans, he set out for Hungary together with a handful of members of British and American delegations. They encountered an ambush and fled to the mountains. The Nazi's launched a manhunt and two months later they were captured. On December 26, 1944, Aba and the other prisoners of war were transferred to Mauthausen concentration camp in Upper Austria where they were brutally interrogated. They were stripped of their uniforms under the pretext of a medical examination so that they would not be considered prisoners of war. Aba was executed on 26 January 1945 by order of the Third Reich Ministry of Internal Security.

Aba's body was never recovered. An empty tomb with a gravestone was erected in his memory in a section for the 7 Jewish paratroopers of Palestine who fell in Europe in the military cemetery on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem.

In Aba's will he wrote: 'All of you please - do not cry. We only weep for the unfortunate. I am fortunate that I had the honour of being chosen by the Jewish settlement in Palestine to bring encouragement and help to those in need in the Diaspora'.

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Jewish Genealogy Portal

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