

## Summary

The presented book “Institute of Edvard Beneš in the period 1950-1964” is the first ever attempt of comprehensive mapping of the history of this institution. The literature contained so far only occasional partial mentions. An undisputable contribution of the work about this Institute was therefore in particular the use of copies of until now unpublished archival documents, the originals of which were acquired after the death of Jaromír Smutný by the Columbia University in New York. By analyzing the scope and content of these materials it was possible to outline the characteristics of the whole fund. It was thus possible to use the contemporary official documents about the activities of IEB, but also private diaries and correspondence. The documents and texts presented in the book can help other researchers to better understand the problems of that period of Czechoslovak history and inspire them in their future work.

The emphasis was naturally put on the role of the Presidential Chancellor of president Beneš – that is Jaromír Smutný. It was him who initiated upon the request of Beneš foundation of the Institute, which was confirmed by the preserved archival materials. Mr. Smutný became, paradoxically, also the "limiting factor" on the Institute activities. He became unreliable for many exiles as a result of his collaboration with Klement Gottwald as his presidential Chancellor after the abdication of President Beneš. Mr. Smutný remained in that role for several months as an active participant in the domestic political scene. This situation was somewhat advantageous for Beneš, Gottwald, but naturally the most to him personally. The thing is that he could have comparatively easily prepare his departure with his family into exile. It was possible to newly describe this stage of life of Jaromír Smutný by additional facts.

The role of other co-founders of the Institute was also described in the best achievable detail, namely of the formal member Vojta Beneš, a prominent physician František Smetánka, active member Jaroslav Stránský and complicated and unstable Lev Sychravý. Particularly the personality of František Smetánka was not known well in connection with the IEB. These personalities have created, together with Jaromír Smutný, the first Board of the IEB. The book did not omit also the less famous role of Jan Opočenský and Karel Lisický, who later became members of the Board.

I unfortunately failed to clarify exactly the concrete amounts of finances that Jaromír Smutný invested during the fourteen years into activities of the whole institution, or spent himself or gave to his colleagues to ensure their private needs. This detailed information

might possibly be provided only by the banking institution in London, where the so-called “Beneš account” was opened. The presented book demonstrates on the basis of yet unpublished archival materials from the Institute that the money deposited by Edvard Beneš in London was used by Mr. Smutný for purchase of a house at the Gwendolen Avenue. This house remained in the private property of the Smutný family until the seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it was sold. The IEB residence in the Hans Place was in the house, which in part of the archival material of a private nature (Jaromír Smutný diary from the years 1950 to 1951) is referred to as a purchased building. The sources of institutional nature (IEB Chronicle) refer to the same building only as to the rented building. This discrepancy has unfortunately not been clarified. However, on the basis of the sources and documents cited in the present book, it is reasonable to assume that the greater part of the funds from the so-called Beneš account was spent by Jaromír Smutný and his family for their own use. In spite of that the Institute still managed to create a unique material base, which can be evaluated as very interesting and necessary in the conditions of exile. As it is presented in the book numerous important events took place there, as well as regular meetings of various exile organizations.

This book naturally focused mainly on the actual operation of the IEB. The author analyses the structure and frequency of activities organised by the Institute. They, similarly as in all others Czechoslovak exile organizations, were gradually restricted. The declining interest of exiles, their comparatively high age and scepticism from the prolonged exile, personal disputes, and in particular the absolute connection of any IEB activities with the person of Jaromír Smutný lead after his death to a total decline of that institution, which then existed only formally. The main content of activities during fourteen years of existence of the Institute were regular monthly meetings of members combined with some lectures. An undoubtedly interesting fact is that the lecture activities involved also english speaking foreigners. Activities of the Institute held thus an international range.

On the other hand the Institute failed to realise in full extent deeper cooperation with representatives of other Central European anti-communist exile groups. The only exception was represented by just three presentations given in the IEB by the representatives of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania about the situation in their national exiles. It can therefore be concluded that exactly an evaluation of activities of anti-communist and exile organisations from Central Europe in London would deserve a separate investigation in future. As years went by, the presentations in the Institute began serving rather to meetings of the old exile generation than to education and transfer of new scientific knowledge.

A separate topic, to which one whole chapter is devoted, is the edition of the Institute “Documents and debates”. This edition was presented comprehensively for the very first time, as an integral overview of the contents of individual issues. The issues contain mostly memories and opinions of exile personalities from the IEB environment concerning the key milestones of the modern Czechoslovak history in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from Czech and Slovak members and supporters of the Institute, some foreigners also contributed to the “Documents and debates”, as they dealt with research of topics from Czech or Czechoslovak history.

The personalities, who wrote for the Institute, usually also read the lectures there. In my book I managed to supplement, and in some cases newly process, biographical data of nearly all of these personalities, who collaborated with the IEB over the years. It is this comprehensive overview of the personalities and themes dealt with in the activities of the IEB, that has not yet been processed so far by anyone. Among the most important personalities we should mention the economist Jan Viktor Mládek, political scientist Josef Korbela, historian Zbyněk Zeman, and also at least partial cooperation of the painter František Kupka with the Institute. Statements of last living witnesses of events, who collaborated directly with Jaromír Smutný and others were also documented. These were memories of Mrs. Meda Sokol-Mládková and Peter Hrubý. Descendants of the Institute members or their friends also contributed with their memories, for example Jan Martin Stránský.

For the first time ever I managed to characterise the organisational structure of the IEB. This Institute was apparently the only exile organisation after 1948 with research and professional ambitions. It tried to get inspiration from similar institutions, in particular from the “TGM Institute” dating from the thirties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Creation of the Institute in the exile from the very beginning limited of course its development, activities and organisational structure. Besides the Board that was supposed to manage the IEB, several working committees and commissions were established. They, however, started to meet very irregularly, then sporadically, and finally not at all. It practically manifested the traditional exile phenomenon, when all the organisations struggled with declining interest.

The present book about the London Institute has managed also to emphasize the proclaimed effort of its founders to support the young generation in the Czechoslovak exile. Jaromír Smutný with his colleagues in London met with the leadership of the student journal “Reality” from Geneva and tried to work together. They agreed, albeit for a short time only, on the financial support of the journal “Reality” by the institution managed by Mr. Smutný. Young exiles refused the constant politically motivated conflicts of the past and they had also

less sharp opinions on some touchy topics (e.g. displacement of Germans from Czechoslovakia after the World War 2). They also criticised the political generation of Jaromír Smutný for their role in the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948.

From a comprehensive viewpoint, Mr. Jaromír Smutný and his colleagues managed to create the Institute as a specific exile institution. Although they managed to create an adequate material background, they did not fulfil all the objectives of the Institute. The personalities were noticeably lacking, mainly those who would gradually establish themselves in its organs, as well as willingness, vigour and health of individual members that was necessary for development of activities of the aforementioned institution. The project of the IEB can be in any case considered as very interesting and unique attempt to preserve, in spite of all the problems and shortcomings, the ideals of Czechoslovak democratic traditions for future generations.