

## SUMMARY

The book deals with the topic of significance and development of Radio Free Europe's Czechoslovak Service in the 1950–1994 period. In times of strict censorship, the broadcasts grew in major importance, still lacking in sufficient scholarly research.

When the Communist Party took over power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, Czech and Slovak democratic politicians left the country for the West. They wished to break the isolation of people living behind the Iron Curtain and promote restoration of democracy in their homeland. In 1949, the National Committee for Free Europe was established in the USA as a formally autonomous citizens association. The project of Radio Free Europe was to become its best-known activity.

Radio Free Europe was one of foreign radio broadcasts that began to operate in order to break the information blockade effected by strict media censorship imposed in

Central-East Europe by communist establishments to acquire full ideological control over national broadcasts. The foreign radio broadcasts were either already existing official radio stations or the formally non-governmental Radio Free Europe (RFE). The fundamental question is the RFE broadcast's actual position within the Cold-War political struggle between the two opponent blocks and its possible developments.

The origins of Czech and Slovak language broadcasts were rather complicated. RFE started as an exile platform with the purpose of Czechoslovak liberation from the Communist Party regime. However, the program composition largely depended on American foreign policy as well as on the changing political situation. RFE's unique position lay in its formal independence of and distance from the political course of government radio stations, such as, for example, the Voice of America.

From the Czechoslovak Service's very beginnings, prominent posts were taken by exiles, majority of whom were significant representatives of Czech and Slovak cultural and political life – Ferdinand Peroutka, Pavel Tigrid, Jan Čep, and Julius Firt among the most noteworthy ones. The refugees who devoted (some part of) their life to work in this kind of media knowingly refused full assimilation abroad and despite all possible obstacles stayed in touch with Czechoslovakia. The book includes also comparison of RFE and other foreign radio stations plus a newly compiled list of RFE Czech and Slovak employees and associate workers.

Some consideration is given also to press campaigns that took place in the 1950's with the help of balloons carrying news reports over the closed borders. These campaigns,

closely related to radio broadcasts, represent the most vigorous attempt to stimulate citizens' resistance against the communist regime. The largest numbers of the leaflets were targeted at the Czechoslovak territory.

Another major issue is the so far uncovered topic of the RFE broadcast's reception in Czechoslovakia in both unofficial social spheres, and the corresponding response within the whole social spectrum. RFE's broadcast alone could not effect significant transformation; other factors were also needed for that. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the long-term cultivation of society and in moments of social activation, the broadcast's significance is undeniable. This became eminent particularly in the final years of the communist regime.

Indirect evidence of RFE's impact in Czechoslovakia can be seen in the profoundly negative response on the part of political and government authorities to whom Radio Free Europe represented the embodiment of the enemy exile's evil subversion. The official establishment had adopted this attitude at the very start of RFE broadcast to Czechoslovakia in May 1951 and it remained unchanged until the collapse of the regime in 1989. This fact had also effected permanent effort of the communist regime to silence the broadcasts. The persecution touched not only the broadcasting site in Munich, but also RFE listeners. The communist regime carefully monitored and penalised any mail or phone contact between RFE and its listeners. Already in the early 1950's a huge net of jamming facilities was installed in Czechoslovakia to block foreign broadcasts, those of RFE in particular. The jamming continued up until the end of 1988. The regime had naturally also run a number of propaganda and disinformation campaigns.

However, research in the former Czechoslovak State Security Service Archive allows us to draw a conclusion that despite its enormous effort and utilisation of a variety of tools, the Czechoslovak communist regime failed to reach any considerable success in its fight against Radio Free Europe.

After the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, Radio Free Europe was confronted with a major challenge of defining its position within the social and political transformation process in East-Central Europe. Initially, it channelled its effort into promoting democratic changes in Europe and later on into service to freedom of expression in other countries throughout the world.