Title: Forgotten Apocalypse - The Czech Reflection of the Retreat of the German Heeresgruppe Mitte

Author: Mgr. Tomáš Jakl

Abstract: There are war campaigns that can be described simply, others more difficult to describe, and some cannot be reconstructed by a continuous narrative at all. The events in the Czech Lands in the first two weeks of May 1945 belong to the most difficult to describe. The fact that there was the largest of last German fighting groups of armies is well known. It is also commonly known that it was the Central Army Group commanded by Field Marshal Ferdinand Schörner. Significantly less is known that as a result of the outbreak of the Czech Uprising, this group of armies retreated across the rebellious territory to the demarcation line between the US and the Red Army

The last desperate illusion of German soldiers was that they would contact the Americans and jointly drive the Russians out of Europe. Allied Commander-in-Chief in the West, General Dwight David Eisenhower, did not intend to do anything after the death of US President Roosevelt, which the Soviet dictator could even interpret as a similar development. Not only did he forbid General Patton from crossing the agreed line in advance with the Soviets, visually accommodating the retreating Germans, but the US troops also released the captured German troops from the units that fought on the Eastern Front to the Red Army. In addition to the Americans, Czech insurgents also handed over their captured Germans to the Red Army. Thus, about 800,000 Army Group troops fell into Soviet captivity.

The circumstances of the end of the army group Centre or Heeresgruppe Mitte still represent the proverbial "white spot" of Czech history. Immediately after the war, references to the German retreat came into conflict with the official Communist thesis on the early arrival of the Red Army. After 1948, the image of the end of World War II in the Czech lands was limited to the Prague Uprising and the arrival of the Red Army. While the presence of the US Army in Western Bohemia was occasionally mentioned, although usually with a large negative sign, the German retreat to the US demarcation line was completely taboo. In Czechoslovak historical atlases, only the planned course of the Red Army's Prague operation is depicted to this day, including the siege and destruction of the whole army group Centre in Eastern Bohemia, which has never occurred. Basic research carried out in both domestic and foreign archives now allows us to look at this stage of our share of the victory in World War II with sharply sharper optics and put it in a much broader perspective.

The work in its first part describes the retreat of the Central Army Group through the Czech lands in May 1945 in the light of contemporary historical knowledge. It follows the "anatomy" of the army group Centre, its strength and internal organization. It analyses in detail the negotiations on the German unconditional surrender in Reims and their consequences in the Czech lands. It outlines the abuse of the German retreat in the Soviet Union's pressure on the Czechoslovak government in the post-war period. The second part of the thesis is devoted to the image of the German retreat in Czech historiography, literature and film.