

## Abstract

During the first republic, Hubert Ripka (1895–1958) was one of the most active democratic orientated journalists and closest colleagues of minister of foreign affairs and later president Edvard Beneš. His political and journalist beginnings are connected with national democratic group Mladá generace. What was crucial for Ripka's career was the split between left and right wings of Mladá generace in 1920, when he – after the victory of the right wing – withdrew. Antonín Pešl brought him to the Národní osvobození, which was associated with Československá obec legionářská and politics of Hrad. In the area of foreign policy he focused above all on monitoring political and cultural life in Jugoslavia, he became a secretary of Československo–jihoslovanská liga, member of Slovanský ústav, he contributed to the Yugoslavian periodicals and to the renovated Slovanský přehled. Ripka's most important lecture activity was associated with prestigious Klub Přítomnost.

He worked in Lidové noviny since 1930, yet he still contributed to a lot of other periodicals. With growing threat of Pangermanism he concentrated on all kinds of support of Little Entente. He made informative foreign trips since 1932, from which he brought summary reports to E. Beneš. In 1934 he participated significantly in the programme of Demokracie řádu a činu, which was an attempt to adapt the democratic order to the new economic and political conditions of the thirties. One year later he was the head of the first official expedition of Czechoslovak journalists to the Soviet union. In 1935 he became a member of Československá strana národně socialistická. An important aspect was Ripka's informative attachment to the group of German neoactivists and also to French and British politicians who were refusing the policy of appeasement. He was in opposition to the capitulation in Munich days, he became a member of Výbor na obranu republiky and tried to stop giving away the frontier regions in early days of October. It was unthinkable for him to continue with his journalist career after Munich. With his closest colleagues he agreed on future activities against Nazis and travelled abroad on 10th October 1938, where he became the first figure of new Czechoslovak politician representation in exile.

In England he wrote an extensive study about Munich events *Munich: Before and After*. He worked in Paris since March 1939, mainly as a counterbalance to Š. Osuský. He founded a small printing and propaganda bureaux there to support Beneš's foreign action. He became a member of Československý národní výbor in autumn 1939, where he became the head of Správa pro službu informační. After occupation of France and evacuation to Great Britain he was appointed the state secretary and since October 1941 the state minister of Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry in exile, where he efficiently collaborated with Jan Masaryk – although Ripka's ambitions to become minister of foreign were without doubts. The whole agenda of the ministry, negotiations with Polish and French representations in exile and with representatives of the Soviet union, same as preparation of concrete treaties (negotiations of Czechoslovak–Polish confederation, negotiations of nullity of Munich treaty, treaty of May 1944 with Soviet union etc.) dropped down just on Ripka significantly.

Approaching the end of war he paid attention also to the question of interior order of post-war republic. He took part in negotiations of Blok tří socialistických stran and negotiations of national socialists. Ripka's ideas of post-war status of Czechoslovakia in Europe tended to have conception of collaboration with East and also with West, as a guarantee against new German aggression. He considered the collaboration of smaller nations of Central Europe to be an important factor

henceforth. With certain good will, but also with diligence, he approached towards confederation plans in Central Europe and federation plans in Europe. In exile he led also negotiations about transfer of Czechoslovak Germans after the end of war, in which case his opinion was closer to more radical standpoint of home resistance. He was in charge of liquidation of Czechoslovak exile establishment in London in spring 1945. He had legitimizing role towards Česká národní rada during Prague uprising in May 1945, thanks to his connection with home and government in Košice.

The high of his political career was the position of Minister of Foreign Trade in 1945-1948, also due to the fact that foreign trade actively created as a means of shaping foreign relations and foreign policy orientation of Czechoslovakia. The socialization process he understood as a synthesis of freedom and equality, as a higher form of democracy, while maintaining a certain level of private enterprise. He formulated opinions of national socialists as a counterweight to the communists. In 1946 he became an associate professor at Charles University. As decisive moment in the evolution of postwar state he considers the rejection of the Marshall Plan in July 1947. He reported himself as of the initiator of the demise of the non-Communist ministers from 20 February 1948, which, however, did not take account of all possible variant of future evolution. After brief deliberations about work at the university he escaped with the help of Josef Ševčík, Bohumila Pešlová and Milada Horáková abroad. At home he was condemned as a traitor to the Czechoslovak people, in exile he supported the action for refugees and issuing Czechoslovak periodicals, he wrote a study about February 1948. He was aware of the differences from the year 1938 and doubt about the possibility of elimination of the USSR at all.

Greater understanding for the activities found political emigres in the United States, where Ripka and his family moved. There he became involved in the activities of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, although he criticized its arrangement based on political parties. The European integration process he understood as a path to liberation Central European nations. He was a member of the National Committee of Free Czechoslovakia from 1951-1952, an opposition group to the RSCČ. The worst period in the USA was 1954, when he was investigated by the Senate Subcommittee on Homeland Security because of fears of Communist infiltration. In 1955 he returned to Europe, where he was considered the most important representative of not only Czechoslovakia, but also throughout Central Europe. The end of his life he put together with a policy of self-liberation, the idea of liberation without war confrontation, but economic and political pressure of the West against the Soviet Union. He died in January 1958 in London.

### **Key words**

Národní osvobození, Lidové noviny, Czechoslovakia's foreign policy, Munich Agreement, Czechoslovakia's government in exile in London, February 1948, Rada svobodného Československa.