

Toman Brod At Work



This is a photograph from my workplace, the Military Historical Institute.

One time a delegate of Western military attachés came to visit us, there were about ten of them, and I was supposed to give them a tour of the museum and show them the local exhibits, I probably got the task because I spoke English, my other colleagues didn't.

The visitors made fun of my explanations, because I of course told them stupidities, those exhibits were stupid, so they made faces...

Right after school I went to work at the Military Historical Institute, where I got to the question of Czechoslovak resistance in the West during World War II, which of course was a huge taboo.

For one, Benes was a gangster, and all those that fought in the West were criminals, most or all of them were accomplices of imperialism, so after February they were in prisons.

I and another colleague, Eduard Cejka, tried to describe this history more objectively. Not objectively, that wasn't possible, but at least to show that they weren't all reactionaries, that on the contrary.

They were people that fought against Hitlerism, for the Republic, that they were people that should be given credit. But that was a shock for the political workers in the army.

They almost lynched us for that. We wrote a book, that when a person reads it today, he would say that it's horrible, but unfortunately it wasn't possible to write it in any other way.

The important thing isn't that it contains rubbish, the important thing is the theme, that it's written about soldiers in the West, who weren't imperialists, who fought for freedom.

That book met with an amazing response. It even won some prize in a Freedom Fighters Union contest, but for a long time the censors didn't allow its publication, that didn't happen until the 1960s.

We put on many lectures across the entire country, they were full, former soldiers from the West would come to them, those that had already been released from jail at the beginning of the 1960s.

Of course, it was a sensational thing for them, that someone had finally begun to talk about them as people that had helped free the country. I recall, that at one lecture one former soldier came forward and said to me: 'You know, I fought for our country.'

But now, if we again had the situation where someone would be threatening our country, and my son joined the army, I'd rather break his legs than let him go fight for it.' That really engraved itself deeply into my memory.