
Authors Introduced a German-Language Collective Monograph on the History of Charles University

The new collective monograph on the history of Charles University, entitled “Die Prager Universität Karls IV.” (Prague University of Charles IV), was presented to the public at an event on January 18. The book covers many aspects of the life of the diverse academic community that had been hosted by the university since its foundation until the 1940s, focusing specifically on the students and professors from German-speaking countries. Its authors, the publishing team and guests celebrated the volume in the Small Auditorium of Karolinum.



Blanka Mouralová from the **Collegium Bohemicum** non-profit commended the fact that the presentation of the volume took place where it belongs – on the university grounds. Collegium Bohemicum published the book in collaboration with the German Culture Forum for Eastern Europe (Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa) and Charles University. Financial support was also provided by the Prague branch of Goethe-Institut. The book was published in May 2010.

A distinguished audience of historians, members of the academic community and various cultural organizations was welcomed by **Professor Ivan Jakubec, Prorector for Doctoral Programmes and Academic Qualifications**. “Charles University was not only the oldest university north of the Alps, but also an impulse for founding other similar schools in Austria, Poland and Germany. Although the particulars have changed, the basic mission of the university still holds – it is to seek the truth and disseminate it. The legacy of the university consists of scientific and creative work, the art of scholarly discussion, the art of lecturing and of course university freedoms. Therefore universities are not only institutions of old – they are very much alive.”



According to Dr. Petr Svobodný, director of the Institute of History of Charles University and the Charles University Archive, the publication is a unique complement to the series of books about Prague’s universities published by his team, as it focuses on the German-Czech and Czech-German relations and is written in German. The monograph collects contributions by Czech, German and Finnish historians that evolved from talks given at Humboldt University in Berlin. It has been praised for its interdisciplinary and international approaches to the most important milestones in the history of the university since its foundation until 1945 and for offering new interpretations of the historical clichés related to the disputes between the Czechs and the Germans about Prague’s university. The presentation walked the audience through the whole volume, mapping religious, political, social and cultural changes, at times very tumultuous, that affected the life of Charles University. Those authors who took part in the presentation took up the uneasy task of summarizing their chapters in mere ten minutes.



Prof. Dr. phil. Christian Krötzl (left) started, giving a talk about the phenomenon of the foundation of the university as an event of great importance for the whole of Europe. **Dr. Michal Svatoš** from the Institute of History of Charles University followed, focusing on the Decree of Kutná hora, which ousted non-Czech masters from the university and brought forth its division.

Professor Jiří Pešek, director of the Institute of International Studies of the Charles University Faculty of Social Sciences then took the floor, talking about two competing universities in the 16th and 17th century Prague, the Protestant Academy and the Jesuit Academy. At that time, Prague became a centre of the Holy Roman Empire, residence of many emperors and the starting point of many reformation and counter-reformation attempts which had broad implications for the whole empire.



Dr. Ivana Čornejová, head of the Institute of History of Charles University, introduced her chapter about the 18th and 19th century period, in which the university was unified by Ferdinand III and strove to become a modern academic institution.

A unique chapter by *Dr. Georg Gimpl*, a German studies scholar and a historian focusing on Bohemia, describes the atmosphere in the German-speaking philosophy seminar at the reunited university. Citing contemporary sources, often lively and pointed, he showed the isolation, lack of mutual understanding and contacts between the Czech and German parts of the university.



Posledním prezentujícím autorem byla **Doc. PhDr. Alena Míšková, Ph.D. z Masarykova ústavu a Archivu AV ČR**: „Je mi líto, že nemohu říci - konec dobrý, všechno dobré. Veselé to opravdu nebude,“ řekla autorka na úvod. Její zpracovávanou kapitolou sborníku byla krutá 30. a 40. léta 20. století, kdy se Pražská německá univerzita částečně stala semeništěm nacionalizmu, ale zároveň dle archivních materiálů i ostrůvky svobody, mimořádné tolerance a autonomie akademické půdy; společně s univerzitami v Berlíně, Frankfurtu a Vídni hostila na své půdě i nejvyšší procento židovských vyučujících, kteří tvořili 35 procent pedagogického sboru. I v době okupace se univerzita snažila bránit a zachovat akademické svobody, což se jí částečně dařilo do roku 1944, kdy se zcela dostala do područí nejvyššího nacistického vedení Protektorátu.



The remaining two chapters of the collection “Die Prager Universität Karls IV.” focus on the Czech university as a competitor of the German one in the 1882 – 1939 period (Hans Lemberg) and on the Prague Linguistic Circle and its international aspects (Tomáš Glanc).

After the individual talks, the presentation of the monograph concluded with a discussion among the authors and the audience.

(Marie Kohoutová)

Translation: Jaroslav Švelch