

SUMMARIES

THE THEFT, BY GERMANS, OF INSIGNIA AND DOCUMENTS FROM PRAGUE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES IN 1945

Karel Hruza

In the april of 1945, authorities of the German administration ordered the historical insignia and many important archive documents of Charles university in Prague to be taken away. These items never reappeared, their whereabouts remaining unknown. Among the stolen items were five 16th-century sceptres and ceremonial chains worn by high functionaries of the university as well as more than six tons of archive materials ranging from the 14th to the 19th century. Even the two charters which decreed the setting-up of the university, one from 1347 and the other from 1348, disappeared in this context. This event is one of the unsolved mysteries of World War II, and the loss it entails constitutes an important part of the Czech collective memory of the German occupation. The present contribution portrays national policies that determined the respective positions of the different ethnic groups from the 19th century onwards and then proceeds to reconstructing the administrative process in 1944 and 1945 that culminated in the seizure of the memorabilia. Among the persons involved, apart from high representatives of the German administration and the curator and the rector of the German university in Prague, were two historians who occupied important functions on the staff of the university at that time: Heinz Zatschek, head of the university archives, and Joachim Beyer, Dean of the philosophical faculty. The article is complemented by reprints of documents including the correspondence between Zatschek and the president of the "Monumenta Germaniae historica" society, Theodor Meyer.