

The history and controversy of the Marian column on Prague's Old Town Square

Abstract

In the fall of 1648, nearly at the end of the Thirty Year's War, the Swedish army has been occupying Prague's Little Side and Castle and heading towards the Old Town. The weakest point of the defense was the Charles Bridge guarded by the so called Marian legion - a small unit of untrained students, townsmen and merchants facing professional army with double the size. During these harsh times these protectors praised the higher power, especially Virgin Mary for help, promising that they would erect a column with her statue on the Old town square. The promise was kept and one of the first monuments of this kind in Europe was built.

The reason of its later demolition was Jirásek's interpretation of that time. He described this period of history as an era of darkness and oppression of the Czech nation after the Battle of White Mountain. The column was considered a glorification of this specific period of time. Most of our society nowadays does not have a clue about the origin and the demolition of the column that once was one of the most beautiful baroque monuments. Just like many other times in our history, our nation has been divided into two sides defending their own opinion.

The aim of this thesis is to find relevant information about this period of time, about reasons that led to its erection and its fall and finally about the conflict of opposing ideas during 20th and early 21st century in the Czech society. Secondly, to make an objective assessment of these historical events and their contribution to society today.