

The National Theatre in Prague during the Nazi Occupation: The Foremost Theatre Scene between Oppression and Resistance. (A Historical-sociological Analysis)

ABSTRACT

The submitted dissertation, based on historical-sociological analysis, describes and explains the status, reaction and functionality of the National Theatre in Prague during the hardest times of our modern history – the occupation of the Czech lands by Nazi Germany, the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939–1945), the era when the National Theatre, as the top cultural institution, consolidated its artistry, its permanent values and interpretation efforts of its ensemble to defend the right of our society to preserve its own culture, its own existence.

The principal objective of this work is to analyze methods and techniques by means of which the National Theatre in Prague, in line with its audience, steadily faced critical situations caused by the Nazi occupation. Among key factors in this process were the acts of Czech theatre performers proving their bravery as they put their work careers and even their own lives at risk to help guide our nation towards awareness and determination not to relinquish the nation's sovereignty.

The Nazis viewed the National Theatre in Prague as a potential instrument for fulfilling their plans through the assertion of their cultural policy under great pressure imposed upon our nation in order to enforce adoption of Nazi principles of cultural life. Having used its dramaturgic capabilities and artistic personalities, the National Theatre, till the very last day of the existence of Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia, fought against the efforts of the Nazis who intended to abuse the leading national institution to serve their goal – transform our sovereign state into a part of the Greater German Reich.

KEY WORDS

theatre, dramaturgy, theatre ensembles, cultural policy, censorship, ideology, Nazism, racism, resistance, identity, Germanization