

"BOHEMIAN LEASES OF THE GERMAN REICH"
CHARLES IV AND THE GERMAN LEASES
OF THE BOHEMIAN CROWN

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On the strength of older treatises (among others those of Siegfried Grotefend, Karl Wild, and Paul Schoeffel) and through the use of the relative collections of documents in the Nuernberg Archives, the author shows in his study of part of it, namely the Bohemian Leases, the admirably clever and resolute territorial policy of King Charles IV. His aim was to build an expandable connection between Bohemia, the important towns on the Main and Rhein, and his private properties in Luxemburg, and to this end his policy was to acquire all the official positions, castles, properties, mortgages, leases and tolls in that area.

The most important of these leases from the Bohemian Crown was Oberpfalz, which originated from the Wittelsbach crown and family properties and the Bacharach marriage contract of 1349, and grew particularly through the leases of 1353. The author investigates, through some examples, how, under what legal titles, and for whom the rights were acquired in this region by Charles IV.

Besides civic-rights (which brought disadvantages for the local knights), the granting of capital courts and prerogatives, purchases and pledges played an important role. Where the necessary agreement for this development of his power was not directly given by the Electors, Charles worked with very subtle transactions of Feudal Law, as in the acquisition of properties where he put his son Wenzel to the fore, and later these acquisitions (Heidingsfeld Castle and the village of Prichsendorf, which was granted civic rights) coming to his charge. Wenzel's compensation for leasing his Allodia "voluntarily" was the transformation of the mortgage deeds of Heidingsfeld and Mainbernheim into State leases, with the agreement of the Electors. Practically, this meant the leases became Wenzel's indisputable property, and in the end profited Charles' territorial policy.

On grounds of the rather uncertain expression "Bohemian Leases of the Reich" the author pursues further the legal development of these Bohemian titles outside Bohemia, treats shortly the dissensions which arose with the acquisition of Luxemburg property by the Hapsburgs, and finally speaks of the role of the Bohemian Leases in the Oberpfalz during the Landshut succession dispute of 1503.

The Bohemian Crown guarded the rights of the leases very well afterwards, especially with regard to the formation of troops and mortgage payments. Even after the battle of the "Weissen Berg" the sovereignty of Oberpfalz leases played an important political and confessional role. Nuernberg in particular was affected.

Not until 1805, with Article 15 of the Pressburg Peace Treaty, were the Bohemian Leases in the German Reich eliminated, and through that the remains of Charles IV's territorial policy.