

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION AND ECONOMIC BOOM:  
THE BRNO PROTESTANTS AND SOCIETAL CHANGE,  
1781-1815

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The years following the legalization of Protestant denominations granted by Emperor Joseph II. in his toleration patent were a period of economic boom in Moravia. The capital, Brno, became a center of the production of high-quality woolen fabrics. Tens of thousands of people moved to the “Moravian Manchester”, which also blossomed in the cultural and intellectual fields. Apart from factories, large trade enterprises, and banks, institutions such as learned and reading societies, theaters and museums, Masonic and Illuminate lodges emerged. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Brno symbolized the amalgamation of West European economic know-how with Protestant ideas and reform Catholicism. Important for this productive mixture was the support extended by some Moravian noblemen as well as the fact that professional experts and clergymen moved there, such as pastor Victor Heinrich Riecke (1759-1830), who had roots in Stuttgart. They made Brno a place where several languages and denominations came in touch with each other. Brno lost this extraordinary significance in the wake of the economic downturn following the Napoleonic wars, when monitoring and repression of the Protestant population were also reintroduced.