

THE REFORMATION IN BOHEMIA AND LATE HUSSITISM

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Deals with the period from 1471, the year in which George of Poděbrad and Archbishop Johann von Rokitzan died, to 1547, when the Protestant Union was defeated in the Schmalkaldic War. The resistance offered by the Estates to the growing economic power of the royal towns and to the two Jagiellonian kings Vladislaus and Louis was uneven. The uprising of 1484 and the Diets from 1485 to 1500 clearly revealed the groupings among the Utraquists and their varying attitude toward the Catholic section of the Estate of lords and toward the royal towns in the Catholic camp, most of which had a German majority in their *Rat*. A strong shift in power took place after the death of King Matthias Corvinus in 1490, when Moravia, Silesia, as well as Upper and Lower Lusatia reverted to Vladislaus, who was elected King of Hungary. With the increasing importance of its mining, the special position of Egerland and the district (*Kreis*) of Elbogen were consolidated both juridically and nationally. The tensions within Bohemia described in the letters of the humanist Bohuslaus von Hassenstein, especially from 1493 on, are confirmed in the reminiscences of the monk Johannes Butzbach of the years he had spent as a scholar in Bohemia (1488—1494). The documents give further examples of cases where both nations and confessions were living together in a number of towns of northwestern Bohemia (Brüx, Aussig).

Already after Martin Luther's disputation with Dr. Eck in the year 1519, the first lasting links were established between Lutheranism and the Utraquists of Prague. The antagonisms between the Neo-Utraquists, who joined spiritual forces with Luther, and the groups that were willing to establish ties with the Catholic consistorium finally led to the overthrow of the *Rat* in the Old Town of Prague. The new pastor at the Thein Church, Gallus Cahera, went over from the Lutheran side to the Old Utraquists. However, Luther's teachings continued to reach Prague through numerous broadsheets and translations.

From 1517 on, the Bohemian Brethren under Senior Lukas maintained guarded ties with Luther. Michael Weisse from Neisse and Johann Horn (Cornu) from Taus repeatedly travelled to Wittenberg. Weisse became a preacher in the „Deutsche Gemeinde“ of the Unity of Brethren in Landskron, translated and composed songs for a German hymn-book (1531). The latter was, however, re-edited after his death by Horn, because it contained numerous ideas of Zwingli, deviating from Luther's doctrine.

Only from 1548 on did the Bohemian Brethren begin clearly to move away from Luther. The connections with the German Anabaptist groups which had gathered in Nikolsburg were also soon broken off. The „Huter“ and „Habaner“ managed to hold their own only in southern Moravia in this first phase of the Reformation.

Departing from the dominions of the Counts Schlick, the reformists of Wittenberg acquired a base that steadily expanded eastward, via the German towns and dominions in northwestern and northern Bohemia. The mining towns were important centers of early Lutheran communities. The grammar school in St. Joachimsthal, from 1532 on under the rector Johannes Mathesius, became a stronghold of Lutheranism as well as humanism. Luther's letters to the Counts Schlick in the years immediately after 1519 demonstrated the effort to build bridges into Bohemia. On the other hand, the lay piety in the old burgher families of the royal towns gained ground as reform Catholicism. It was reflected in the prayer brethren, vesper pictures, and Ecce Homo sculptures of these years, and above all in the late Gothic hall churches built by the burghers.

When Lutheran preachers and Luther himself turned to Hus, many of the national reservations of the Neo-Utraquists were removed. The currents of humanism which emanated from the „Basler Sodalität“ and the Viennese „sodalitas Danubiana“ produced cleavages within the educated Czech strata and led to a kind of national humanism among the aristocracy. Toward the end of the era under consideration, the German humanists, under the influence of Erasmus of Rotterdam and the Bishopric of Olmütz, distanced themselves from Luther. Melancthon, however, gained influence in Bohemia, through Mathesius and Prague circles.