

FREDERICK G. HEYMANN

# George of Bohemia

*King of Heretics*



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George of Bohemia

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# George of Bohemia King of Heretics

BY FREDERICK G. HEYMANN

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*To Edith*



## PREFACE

THIS BOOK, in essence, is a sequel to my earlier study: *John Žižka and the Hussite Revolution* (Princeton 1955). There, I had tried to write an up-to-date account and interpretation of the early, militant phases of Hussitism, which I still believe to be the first and thus the most daring and pioneering of the great European revolutions which did so much to change the character and structure of Western society. I had also tried to draw attention to some forms in which Hussitism as a social and religious movement (and even as a phase of military-technological progress) anticipated and pioneered for similar developments of the sixteenth century, notably the German and Swiss Reformations. In concentrating now (without any attempt at chronological completeness) upon the Poděbradian age I hope to present another aspect in the development of the last great and active phase of the history of the Czech people and state in times of transition from the medieval to the modern world.

In Czech historiography of the nineteenth century, especially by Pa-lacký, the Poděbradian age was generally still considered the second act of the historical drama of Hussitism, another wave of militant determination and heroism with which this small nation defended its reformation, thereby playing a European role far beyond its numerical strength. Some special justification for this view seemed to arise out of the fact that these same years witnessed the gestation and birth of one of the most important developments of early Protestantism: the *Unitas fratrum* or Unity of Czech Brethren. Its growth to real greatness, however, belongs mainly to a later age.

This nineteenth-century view which, with minor exceptions, looked at the Poděbradian age with essentially positive value judgments was not shared by some German Catholic historians but was essentially maintained by Urbánek, the Czech historian who specialized in this field during the last four decades. Some recent Czech interpretations, on the other hand, have taken a less positive view of the Poděbradian age, considering it essentially as the first part of the process of the re-strengthening of feudalism.

While I agree with some of the younger Czech historians that the Poděbradian age can hardly be considered a true continuation of

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the great revolutionary phase of Hussitism, I cannot help feeling that the characterization of this age as essentially a return to feudalism is an over-simplification. George, indeed, arose from a background of largely feudalist interests and ideas, but he succeeded in freeing himself from them to a remarkable extent, and he used his growing strength to open the way toward a development parallel, in many regards, to Western-European developments, especially to the Tudor phase of English history. This vigorous if short-lived development of "Tudorism" in Bohemia is, as I have tried to show, one of the most important characteristics of the Poděbradian era. It was not because of but in spite of George's life and work (and partly because of his early death) that in the half-century after him that type of late feudalism known as the "ständestaat" prevailed. This destroyed, I think, the chance, still open in George's time, for a monarchy that combined effective central power with constitutionalism and that was able to achieve a form of internal balance among the social forces inside the Czech realm. Therewith, also, disappeared all hope for a sounder development and, as its possible result, for a stronger state than the one which perished in 1620.

This book has been long in the making, for I have had to suspend work on it frequently for periods of many months. This caused some unforeseen difficulties, partly also because new material came out while the work was already in a progressed state. Thus the fourth volume of Rudolf Urbánek's great *Věk poděbradský* appeared (in 1962) at a time when I had already finished that part of this study dealing with the period covered in Urbánek's last volume: the years 1460 to 1464. It did not induce me to undertake any major revisions either of the factual narrative or the interpretation of the developments of that time, but it did bring some materials and facts into focus which had so far been neglected or misunderstood by earlier Czech and German historiography. Thus it certainly asked for another careful review of what I had written on this middle phase of King George's reign, and resulted in a number of minor clarifications and corrections.

The list of my obligations to helpful institutions and individuals is a long one. Much of my initial work for this undertaking was done during a two-year membership at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. I am deeply grateful to its director, Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, to its School of Historical Studies and especially to its distinguished medievalist, Ernst Kantorowicz, whose recent death is greatly mourned by his friends and disciples. I also want to mention the help that the librarians of the Institute, just as later those of the University

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of Alberta, Calgary, gave me in their effort to obtain by inter-library loan works which were not easy to locate. I am greatly obliged to Dr. Francis Wagner, of the Library of Congress, who gave me generous help by drawing my attention to relevant works in Magyar on the problems of Hungarian-Czech relations and developments in the era of George of Poděbrady and Matthias Corvinus and who presented me with a special bibliography containing extended quotations on these topics. I also owe warm thanks to my friend Prof. Peter Glockner of the University of Alberta, Calgary, who translated for me—since I do not read Hungarian—much interpretive writing of recent or contemporary Hungarian historians. (Luckily no original material from Hungarian sources of the fifteenth century is in any language other than Latin.)

Relating to source material my position was, during those last few years, better than it had been when I worked on my *Žižka*. In 1960 a travel and research grant from the Canada Council gave me the chance to spend a substantial part of the summer in Prague and to make use of libraries and archives there and in Moravia. Throughout my stay there I had the support of the Historical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, of its director Dr. Josef Macek, and especially of Dr. František Graus, to whom I am very grateful. I am also indebted to Dr. Emma Urbánková, Director of the Manuscript Department of the National (University) Library in Prague. I was glad that I was still able to visit and consult her distinguished father, Prof. Rudolf Urbánek, at the time the greatest authority on the Poděbradian era, whose death, in 1962, has unfortunately deprived us of the hope to see the monumental torso of his great work finished by his own hands. Of high value for me was the chance to meet and discuss issues connected with my work with Dr. F. M. Bartoš, Professor Emeritus at the Comenius Evangelical Theological Faculty in Prague, as well as with Dr. Jiří Kejř of the Institute for Legal History of the Academy of Science. During my visit to several Moravian archives (partly connected with this book) Dr. Ladislav Hosák and Dr. Jaroslav Marek kindly gave me their assistance.

The Bohemian aspects of the Poděbradian story are, of course, so intimately intertwined with developments in Austria and other parts of the Holy Roman Empire that visits to places there in 1960 (and, again financed by the Canada Council, in 1963) were useful. In Vienna Professor Alphons Lhotsky gave me his support. In the German Federal Republic I am obligated to Professor Hermann Heimpel, Director of the Max Planck-Institut für Geschichte in Göttingen, under whose di-

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rection the great documentary collection of the *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* is now beginning to fill the large lacuna which had remained in the second half of the fifteenth century. Following his suggestions, three of the editors of volumes due to appear before long made parts of their collections of texts and notes accessible to me in manuscript form. The value of this important source work for studies in this period will fully emerge only when the new volumes are available in print. But even to the extent that I have had access to them I profited much, and shall remain most grateful to Professor Hellmut Weigel in Erlangen, Dr. Irmgard Most in Freiburg, and Dr. Henny Grüneisen in Göttingen, all of whom were generous in their interest and help. Frau Dr. Most in particular went out of her way, at what was for her an especially trying time, to make interesting material available to me and discuss some of it with me in detail.

As with earlier publications my wife has been an indefatigable helper, by providing me with masses of excerpts at the time of research, and by typing and re-typing the manuscript. The dedication of this book to her can only be a small token of my thankfulness.

Calgary, Alberta, April 1964.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AČ</i>	<i>Archiv český</i>
<i>ADB</i>	<i>Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie</i>
<i>AÖG</i>	<i>Archiv für österreichische Geschichte (till 1864 Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichtsquellen)</i>
<i>ČČH</i>	<i>Český časopis historický</i>
<i>ČČM</i>	<i>Časopis Českého Museum (Časopis Musea Českého)</i>
<i>ČMM</i>	<i>Časopis Matice Moravské</i>
<i>ČSČH</i>	<i>Československý časopis historický</i>
<i>DRTA</i>	<i>Deutsche Reichstagsakten</i>
<i>FRA</i>	<i>Fontes rerum Austriacarum</i>
<i>HZ</i>	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>JČSH</i>	<i>Jihočeský sborník historický</i>
<i>KBAA</i>	<i>Das Kaiserliche Buch des Markgrafen Albrecht Achilles</i>
<i>LF</i>	<i>Listy filologické</i>
<i>MIÖG</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung</i>
<i>MVGDB</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen</i>
<i>NDB</i>	<i>Neue Deutsche Biographie</i>
<i>RČSAV</i>	<i>Rozpravy československé akademie věd</i>
<i>SLČP</i>	<i>Starí letopisové čeští, ed. Palacký and re-edited by J. Charvát, in Dílo F. Palackého II, Prague, 1941</i>
<i>SLČV</i>	<i>Staré letopisy české z vratislavského rukopisu, ed. F. Šimek, Prague, 1937</i>
<i>SLČK</i>	<i>Staré letopisy české z rukopisu křižovnického, ed. F. Šimek and M. Kaňák, Prague, 1959</i>
<i>SrS</i>	<i>Scriptores rerum Silesiacarum</i>
<i>VKČSN</i>	<i>Věstník královské české společnosti nauk</i>
<i>ZfGS</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Geschichte Schlesiens</i>
<i>ZVGAS</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Altertum Schlesiens</i>
<i>ZVGMS</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte Mährens und Schlesiens</i>

## PLACE NAMES IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

<i>Czech (or Slovak)</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>Hungarian</i>
Bratislava (Slovakia) (earlier: Prešporok)	Pressburg		Pozsony
Břeh (Silesia)	Brieg	Brzeg	
Brno (Moravia)	Brünn		
Budějovice (Bohemia)	Budweis		
Budín (Hungary)	Ofen		Buda
Budyšin (Lusatia)	Bautzen	Budziszyn	
Bytom (Silesia)	Beuthen	Bytom	
Cheb (Bohemia)	Eger		
Chotěbuz (Lusatia)	Cottbus		
Duchcov (Bohemia)	Dux		
Hlohov (Silesia)	Glogau	Glogów	
Hodonín (Moravia)	Göding		
Hradec Králové (Bohemia)	Königgrätz		
Hradiště (Moravia)	Radisch		
Ivančice (Moravia)	Eibenschitz		
Jáchymov (Bohemia)	Joachimsthal		
Jager (Hungary)	Erlau		Eger
Javory (Silesia)	Jauer	Jawor	
Jihlava (Moravia)	Iglau		
Jindřichův Hradec (Bohemia)	Neuhaus		
Kadaň (Bohemia)	Kaaden		
Kladsko (Bohemia-Silesia)	Glatz	Kłodzko	
Kološ (Transylvania) (Cluj in Rumanian)	Klausenburg		Kolozsvár
Košice (Slovakia)	Kaschau	Koszyce	Kassa
<i>Czech (or Slovak)</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>Hungarian</i>
Kroměříž (Moravia)	Kremsier		
Krumlov (Bohemia)	Krummau		
Krumlov (Moravia)	Kromau		

PLACE NAMES IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

Kutná Hora (Bohemia)	Kuttenberg		
Lehnice (Silesia)	Liegnitz	Legnica	
Litoměřice (Bohemia)	Leitmeritz		
Litomyšl (Bohemia)	Leitomischl		
Loket (Bohemia)	Elbogen		
Malbork (Prussia)	Marienburg	Malborg	
Meziříčí (Moravia)	Meseritsch		
Most (Bohemia)	Brüx		
Nisa (Silesia)	Neisse	Nysa	
Olomouc (Moravia)	Olmütz		
Olešnice (Silesia)	Öls	Oleśnica	
Opava (Silesia)	Troppau	Opawa	
Opoli (Silesia)	Oppeln	Opole	
Osek (Bohemia)	Riesenburg		
Ostříhom (Hungary)	Gran		Esztergom
Osvětím (Silesia)	Auschwitz	Oświęcim	
Pelhřimov (Bohemia)	Pilgram		
Pětikosteli (Hungary)	Fünfkirchen		Pécs
Plavno (Saxony)	Plauen		
Pizeň (Bohemia)	Pilsen		
Přerov (Moravia)	Prerau		
Prostějov (Moravia)	Prossnitz		
Ratiboř (Silesia)	Ratibor	Racibórz	
Roudnice (Bohemia)	Raudnitz		
Slavkov (Moravia)	Austerlitz		
Svidnice (Silesia)	Schweidnitz	Swidnica	
Špilberk (Moravia)	Spielberg		
Těšín (Silesia)	Teschen	Cieszyn	
Tovačov (Moravia)	Tobitschau		
Trenčín (Slovakia)	Trentschin		Trencsén
Trnava (Slovakia)	Tirnau		Nagyszombat
Uherské Hradiště (Moravia)	Ungarisch Hradisch		
Uherský Brod (Moravia)	Ungarisch Brod		
<i>Czech (or Slovak)</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Polish</i>	<i>Hungarian</i>
Uničov (Moravia)	Mährisch- Neustadt		
Ustí (Bohemia)	Aussig		
Varadín (Hungary)	Grosswardein		Nagyvárad

*PLACE NAMES IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES*

(In Rumanian: Oradea Mare)

Vratislav (Silesia)	Breslau	Wrocław
Vysoké Mýto (Bohemia)	Hohenmaut	
Zábřeh (Moravia)	Hohenstadt	
Zaháň (Silesia)	Sagan	Żagań
Zelená Hora (Bohemia)	Grünberg	
Zhořelec (Lusatia)	Görlitz	Zgorzelec
Žitava (Saxony)	Zittau	
Znojmo (Moravia)	Znaim	

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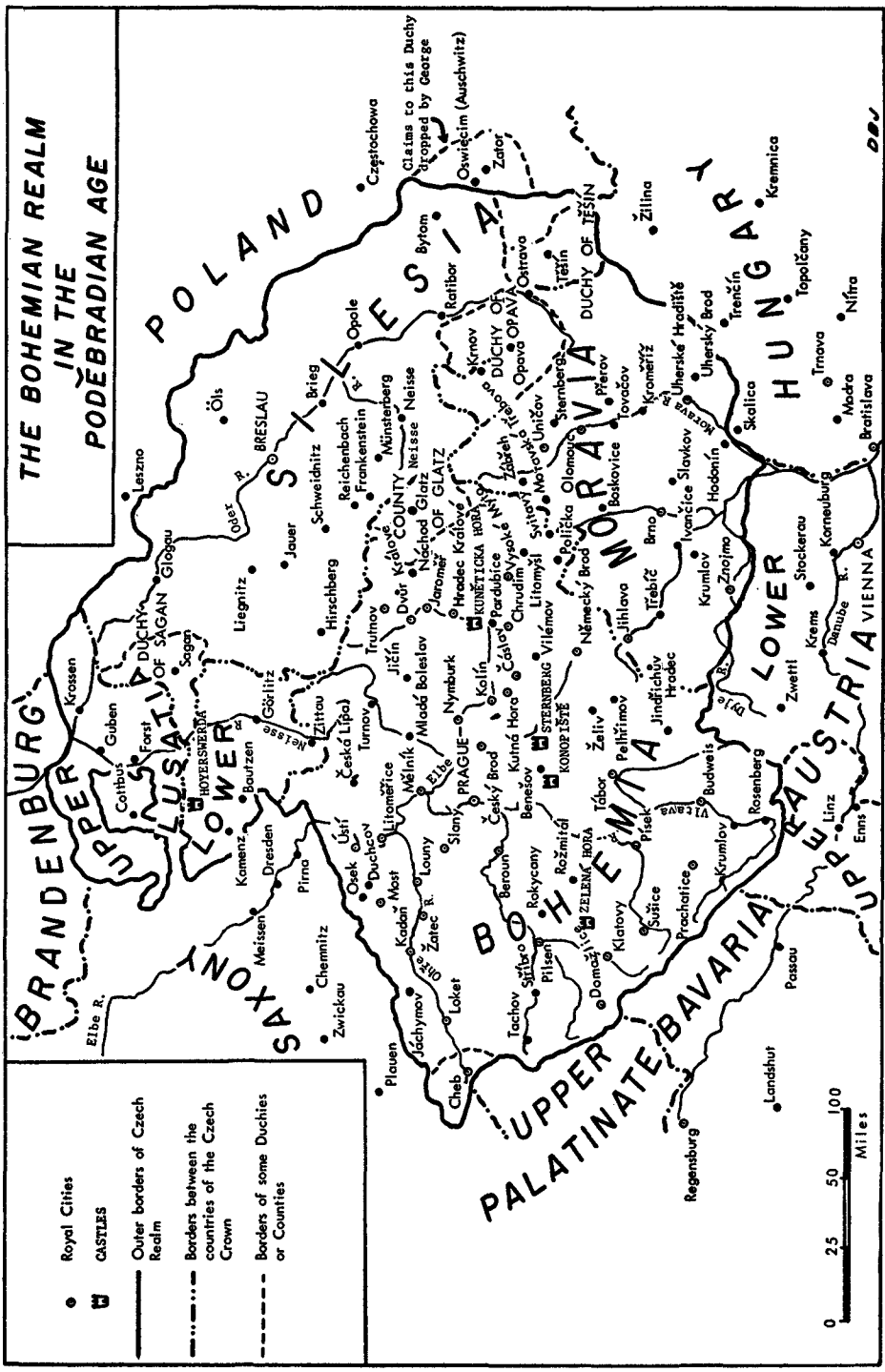
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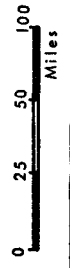
George of Bohemia

King of Heretics

**THE BOHEMIAN REALM  
IN THE  
PODEBRADIAN AGE**



- Royal Cities
- ▣ CASTLES
- Outer borders of Czech Realm
- · - · - Borders between the countries of the Czech Crown
- - - - - Borders of some Duchies or Counties





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## CHAPTER 1

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### INTERREGNUM AND ANARCHY

IN THE course of the last five or six centuries there occurred in Europe hundreds of violent upheavals, some within the frame of a city or town, others regional, still others nationwide or even crossing national borderlines. All of them are significant as they usually indicate that processes of longer duration resulted in socio-structural and socio-ideological changes and tensions with which the existing political systems and powers were no longer able to cope successfully by suppression or peaceful adaptation.

Events of this type took place, for instance, when in a medieval city a strengthened urban middle class, reinforced mainly by its craft guilds, rebelled against and overthrew the rule of a resisting but no longer potent patrician oligarchy. Limited but temporarily successful peasant rebellions occurred in many parts of Europe. It is probably a question of semantics whether all, many or a few of such uprisings should be dignified by the term "revolution." But there certainly are a few such events whose significance was extraordinary in that they drew the social fabric of a whole nation into the process of their violent tremors, thereby substantially altering existing power relationships and social structures in that nation, and even spilling over its borders into other regions and to other peoples. These were the truly great revolutions. There were just five or six of them in as many centuries of European history.

It was the extraordinary fate of a small nation of Slav origin, the Czechs, to have experienced, or it may be said achieved, the very first of those great and historically consequential and productive upheavals: the Hussite one.<sup>1</sup> It had been prepared by a mainly spirit-

<sup>1</sup> For the most recent treatment in English see the present author's book, *John Žižka and the Hussite Revolution*, Princeton, 1955 (later cited as Heymann, *Žižka*). This includes a bibliography on primary and secondary sources. Publication of a new work in two volumes, probably to be called *Husitská revoluce*, by the greatest living Czech authority on Hussitism, Prof. F. M. Bartoš, is impending within the framework of the large standard work on Czech history, *České Dějiny* (started by Novotný). It will be a continuation of Bartoš' previous work on the times of Hus (*Čechy v době Husově*, Prague, 1947). On some important aspects of the Hussite revolution, mainly in relation to the Taborite movement, see the works by J. Macek, especially his *Tábor v husitském revolučním hnutí*, 2 vols., Prague, 1955, 1956.

ual rebellion against the strongest single power structure within Bohemia and indeed in most of Europe, the Roman Catholic Church. It was something of a historical irony that a movement which in itself had been an attempt at changing and reforming this structure, the Conciliar Movement, had in its first great and partially successful effort, at the Council of Constance, put on trial and burned as a heretic the Prague Master John Hus, and this in spite of a safe conduct given to him by the council's protector and president: the Roman King (later Emperor) Sigismund.

Hus was probably the greatest in a whole line of reforming religious minds that had been active in Bohemia in the second half of the fourteenth and in the beginning fifteenth centuries. But, besides being a religious and ethical thinker and reformer of great purity and enormous impact upon his countrymen, Hus had become a national symbol, and his execution in 1415 was felt by people of all stations, including a considerable part of the high nobility, to be an insult to the Czech nation. It was largely this common mood of defiance which led almost the whole nation into resistance against Sigismund, who was also King of Hungary and a younger brother of Bohemia's King Wenceslas IV. This resistance took the most militant forms when, at Wenceslas' death, Sigismund claimed his right to succeed to the Czech crown. What had begun as a limited rebellion in Prague, subterraneously connected with provincial and rural movements and resistance centers, became soon a general revolution against the King and the international Church organization which backed him and his claims.

The sequence of Hussite victories over King Sigismund and the other potentates who tried to crush the small nation of supposed heretics remains one of the amazing epics with which historical truth occasionally rises above dramatic imagination. But the Czech nation, which had united in resisting the hated King, did not long remain united. It could not possibly remain so, for among its motivating, innervating powers of strength were the desires and antagonisms out of which the less privileged parts of the Czech nation—the peasants, the great majority of the townspeople, and a considerable number of the less well-to-do gentry—reacted against the pressure inflicted on them by the upper class of society. Above all, this hostility included the overly wealthy church, but also the—originally largely German—city aristocracy in Prague and some other Czech cities, and those members of the Czech baronial class who

came out for the defense of the status quo economically, politically, and, to an increasing extent, religiously.

These antagonisms often resulted in bloody internal struggles, and at least twice the forces of the Right tried to destroy the newly strengthened "lower" elements forming the Center and Left to bring about an outright restoration of much of the previous power structure, at least as far as the dominant position of the baronial class was concerned. In 1424, in the battle of Malešov, Žižka, the old squire who led the "Warriors of God," defeated the army of lords and the Prague Conservatives and thereby helped essentially to stabilize the new, more balanced relation between the major social, political, and religious groups for another decade. But in 1434, at the battle of Lipany, the armies of the brotherhoods, Taborites and Orphans, allied with the majority of the royal cities of Bohemia, were overcome by a coalition of the Right—again lords and Prague patricians, strengthened by some elements of the Center. Thereby the way was paved for a "Thermidor," implying the restoration of the last Luxemburg, the Emperor Sigismund, to the Czech throne as well as for the general acceptance of the compromise essentially worked out even earlier between the Hussites and the Council of Basel.

But if the battle of Lipany was the decisive "Thermidor" of the Hussite Revolution it did not mean, here as in parallel developments, that the revolution had been for nothing, had not worked any changes of real significance. It had, for one thing, largely eliminated the foreign, mainly German, influence in Bohemia and its impact upon the policy of Prague and other royal cities. Far more important, it had decisively weakened the Roman Church by depriving her of the greater part of her enormous land holdings. From now on the Church, earlier the strongest of all the elements in the feudal structure of Bohemia, was limited to a much narrower economic basis and could not even count upon recouping any substantial part of her losses from the Catholic nobility, who had themselves been among the main profiteers. The Church, from now on, was doubly weakened: by the vast defection of the Hussite Utraquists and Secularians as well as by her lack of sustaining landed estates. She was therefore partly dependent on support from outside, especially from the Holy See, if she hoped to regain a substantial part of her lost position in the fabric of Bohemia's society.

Among those groups that had gained were, as mentioned before, some of the great baronial houses, but their political influence, so

strongly weakened in the years from 1420 to 1434, had not been restored to the high nobility after the end of the Revolution in a measure proportionate to their purely economic gains. This was due to the fact that all through the revolutionary years the gentry as well as large parts of the urban middle class had gained positions considerably stronger than those they had ever occupied before. This was true in economic terms—for they, too, had substantially participated in the confiscation of vast ecclesiastical lands. It was true politically, for both had participated in the increased influence of parliamentary institutions—the *sněmy* or diets—in those prolonged interregnal periods when the national diets had become virtually the only sources of authority recognized by the whole country.

The longing for a national authority strong enough to maintain and protect internal peace was bound to become a very general desire. War, foreign and domestic, had tortured the country too long to be regarded, by the overwhelming majority of the Czech people, with anything but loathing. Even those few who would have profited from the prolonged anarchy would not admit this publicly. But while the causes for and basic attitudes leading to continued strife were complex they tended to express themselves in the same terms that had dominated the period of open war and revolution: the terms of the religious split. And it seemed obvious that now, and for as long as anybody could see or plan for, religious peace, the building and maintenance of stable bridges across the religious schism, was the precondition of peace in general.

But, under the circumstances, there was only one basis for such religious peace. It was the agreement between the Czech Estates and the Council of Basel,<sup>2</sup> culminating in the document called the Compacts, a sort of peace treaty which, after prolonged negotiations, had been solemnly proclaimed by representatives of both sides (and guaranteed by the Emperor Sigismund) in July 1436 in the Moravian city of Jihlava.

This agreement, therefore, played a role of extraordinary impor-

<sup>2</sup> The literature on the Council, even regarding only its dealings with the Bohemian heresy, is tremendous. For the sources see mainly *Monumenta conciliorum generalium seculi decimi quinti; Concilium Basileense*, vols. I and II, ed. F. Palacký and E. Birk, Vienna, 1857 and 1873; and J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova collectio*, vols. 29 and 30, Venice 1788, 1792. For interpretive treatments see the still lively and useful presentation in Palacký's history of Bohemia (German or Czech), III, 3 *passim*; Rudolf Urbánek, *Věk Poděbradský (České dějiny)*, ed. Novotný, III, 1, cited later as "Urbánek, *Věk*") vol. I., chapter 2; finally the valuable sketch by E. F. Jacob "The Bohemians at the Council of Basel," in *Prague Essays*, ed. R. W. Seton-Watson, Oxford, 1449, pp. 8iff.

tance in the consciousness of the Czech nation as a whole, even more so of its Hussite majority. For them especially the Compacts were the only possible basis for the maintenance of internal and external peace. With the acceptance of the Compacts by Emperor and council the Czech nation had been declared free from the unbearable stain of heresy. Yet the document had never been officially confirmed by the papacy. To achieve this confirmation was one of the foremost goals of Czech official diplomacy in the periods following the end of the great Hussite Wars. When again in 1467 the Hussite-Utraquist majority had to take up arms in another bloody war it was, at least in the minds of most people, again a struggle for the maintenance of the Compacts. It is, indeed, impossible to understand this part of Bohemia's and Central Europe's history without an awareness of the issues connected with this charter.

The Compacts were, in their origin, a weakened version of another great document, the Four Articles of Prague, which had demanded: 1. freedom of preaching; 2. freedom for everyone to receive the Holy Eucharist in both forms ("sub utraque specie," hence the name "Utraquists" for the adherents of this usage); 3. a life of apostolic poverty, without earthly possessions or earthly power, for all priests, and 4. the eradication and punishment of all mortal sins, especially public ones.<sup>3</sup> It was this set of demands which had united all Hussite groups and sects during the long revolutionary war. In the Compacts,<sup>4</sup> the articles about the freedom of preaching and the punishment of mortal sins were accepted in a general way but with more precise definitions of those who should have the right to preach, practically excluding all those not ordained, and of the authorities who should be entitled to proceed against the sinner. The third (now the fourth) article was eventually worded in a way which would make it impossible to use it as a basis for the further confiscation of Church property.

It was the former second article which did, in every respect, take first place in the new charter. No other issue could, in the minds of the Czech people, compare in importance with the question of the Eucharist. No peace could possibly have been achieved without this

<sup>3</sup> For the Four Articles see chapter 10 in Heymann, *Žižka*, with bibliographical note on p. 148.

<sup>4</sup> The Compacts (sometimes called Basel Compacts, sometimes Prague and sometimes Jihlava Compacts) together with the large number of connected documents, are printed in *Archiv český*, III (cited hereafter as *AČ*).

concession to the wishes of millions. For this goal, for the Chalice, with all its deep theological, sacramental, and symbolic implications, untold numbers of people had died and were ready to die. And in some parts of the Catholic world, especially in the dependencies of the crown of Bohemia, there were people, mostly men of German origin, who were just as willing to die in their resistance against the Chalice for laymen, which they had come to consider as a heretical practice.

The Roman claim that it was at least an illicit schismatic practice to dispense the Chalice to the laity was of fairly recent origin.<sup>5</sup> The limitation of the use of the cup to priests had been a slow, almost imperceptible change of usage. The Eastern Orthodox Church had never gone along with this change, yet it had never been reproached by Rome for this specific reason. (In later times, e.g. toward the close of the sixteenth century, when Rome accepted the Uniate Church in Eastern Poland as a true Catholic Church, she did not find it difficult to put up with its "Utraquism.") Yet the Council of Constance had ruled strictly against the Chalice, and all through the Hussite Wars a compromise on this issue had seemed well-nigh hopeless.

The Compacts, indeed, had achieved just this compromise, as a result of the desperate longing for peace that in the mid-thirties had animated equally the Czech people and their—mostly German—neighbors. But compromise had not meant a genuine rapprochement of hitherto diverging views—a thing which seemed so rarely attainable in theological disputes—rather was it a successful attempt at finding formulas by which the remaining divergence was, for the time being, skillfully hidden from general view—and especially from the view of the other side.

What was the content of this compromise regarding the Eucharist? The Czechs had demanded first that the communion in both forms be made obligatory for everyone in Bohemia and Moravia, but this was out of the question as it would have required an order from the Council to all Catholics in these countries to submit to a ritual which the Church had only so recently condemned. The representatives of the Council finally agreed that the Chalice be given to those men and women who were used to it and expressly demanded it, as long as otherwise they lived in the faith and the ritual of Christ and the Sacred Church. The priest, however, should never, in giving the

<sup>5</sup> See J. Smend, *Kelchspendung und Kelchversagung in der abendländischen Kirche*, Göttingen, 1898.

Chalice, miss reminding the communicant that, in each form, bread and wine, the whole Christ was given to him.

The Czechs reluctantly agreed to this, feeling that at least the substance of their central demand had been granted. They would, so they expected, be left with the right to the Chalice for all time. The important question of whether children would be allowed the Chalice was left open for future negotiations, as were other, seemingly less important details of ritual. The general functioning of the whole arrangement appeared to be safe if the Czechs could elect a trusted clerical leader as the head of the whole Bohemian Church. This right underlay the acceptance of the Compacts by the Bohemian diet, and to this arrangement the Emperor Sigismund gave his official blessing, which appeared to the Czechs as a guaranty, little reason though they had to trust him. The man who, in a rather non-canonical procedure, was elected as Archbishop of Prague by a committee of the Bohemian diet in 1435 was John Rokycana,<sup>6</sup> the Utraquist who had been the leading cleric and theologian of the Hussite center since 1429 and had had a most important role in the long previous negotiations. The struggle over his confirmation by Rome was therefore intimately connected with the general struggle over the Compacts.

But grave difficulties arose only hours after, in July 1436, the formal signing of the Compacts and the conclusion of peace between the Czechs and their former enemies had been joyfully consumed and celebrated in the Moravian city of Jihlava. The legates of the council, Philibert and Palomar, immediately tried to prevent Rokycana and his Utraquist priests from giving the Chalice to some of his Czechs on the grounds that he was not, now, officiating in his own parish.<sup>7</sup> This was just an indication of the policy to be pursued henceforth: this policy tried to establish as narrow as possible an understanding of the Compacts. In the first place the Roman prelates hoped, thereby, to keep the Czechs from widening their special status in a way which could endanger the conception of a unified Church. Yet there was another side to it which the Czechs had not expected: The Church thereby gained a position from which any small deviation from the Roman understanding of the Compacts could be construed as a breach of faith on the side of the Czechs—an act which then could be answered with declaring the Compacts as

<sup>6</sup> See *AČ*, III, 436f. On Rokycana see my article: "John Rokycana, Church Reformer between Hus and Luther," *Church History*, Sept. 1959, 240-280.

<sup>7</sup> See V. V. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy*, 2nd ed., IV, Prague, 1899, 708ff.

no longer valid. The Czech Hussites very soon suspected that this was the intention—and felt betrayed by Church and Emperor.

The Hussites were soon to learn that this was not the only subterfuge used by the delegates of the council. There was the limitation of the right to receive the Chalice to those who “had the usage” of the communion in both kinds. This, in the eyes of the Czechs, clearly meant that all Hussites, all Utraquists, would henceforth have this right, free from the danger of again being called and treated as heretics. Essentially the reference to the usage would then merely have been a measure to protect orthodox Catholics from being pressured into the Utraquist practice. This was, of course, what many of the Hussite leaders had hoped to do, as they were as convinced as their opponents that the living together of people with different ritual would probably result in never-ending conflicts. Yet they had made this concession in the sincere hope of obtaining a permanent *modus vivendi*, and, while it would be wrong to deny that in the years and decades to follow both sides used pressure on each other, the wonder was that this pressure was not any greater, especially on the side of the vast Hussite majority in Bohemia, and that for long stretches of time the religious struggle was kept within narrow limits.

But to the Roman Church the sentence of the “usage” was not meant as the basis of a permanent *modus vivendi* between the people “*sub una*” and the people “*sub utraque*.” On the contrary, it was expected to be the basis for the removal of the difference. This could be done simply by understanding this phrase in a limited, personal sense. The Chalice, so Bishop Philibert of Coutances, one of the main legates of the council and one of its most peace-loving representatives, declared in an explanatory instruction,<sup>8</sup> was only to be given “to those who had had the usage at the time of the acceptance of the Compacts.” Because children, in the understanding of the Church, were anyhow excluded from taking the communion and thus could not possibly have “the usage,” it was only a question of time, just a few decades, till the last man entitled to Utraquist communion would have stopped breathing. And what was the span of a few decades for the Eternal Church! It is easy to see that this argument, which, in the Church’s later dealings with the problem of the Compacts, was to play an increasingly important role, impressed the Hussites as a maliciously contrived deceit.

<sup>8</sup> *Fontes rerum Austriacarum* II, 20, 477 (hereafter cited as *FRA*.)

This view, easily understandable and almost inevitable as it was, is nevertheless too partisan to be accepted by the historian. The motivations behind this stratagem were more complex. True, among some of the members of the council the old, terrible idea that no faith need ever be kept with heretics had not died out. But others, especially men like Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, had come to know *and appreciate the human qualities of the Czech Utraquist leaders*—even of the more radical Taborite priest-general Prokop the Bald—and were impressed by their genuine religious and moral zeal. These prelates, we may assume, did not contrive the scheme just discussed “with malice aforethought.” Rather did they feel that those people had been led astray by their over-zealousness for a Church reform the basic necessity of which, especially in regard to the constitution of the Church, they themselves did not deny.

If the prelates hoped that, by this ingenious device, the Hussite deviation would slowly disappear, even though it had, for the time being, ceased to be regarded as heretical, they had, from their ecclesiastical point of view, sound reasons for it. In a sense they, and not the Hussites, were more realistic in their judgment about the ultimate meaning of Hussitism. The Hussites, or at least the more moderate Utraquists, claimed that with their reforms, so strongly based on the Bible and the practice of the earliest Christians, they stayed right in the center of what they understood the Church to mean. Thus it seemed absurd to them to be called schismatics, let alone heretics. But the Roman prelates, with their strong feeling for the historical character and the constitutional structure of the Church, sensed that what was afoot here was much more than the type of reform which they themselves, as advocates of a measure of Conciliar parliamentarism, would have liked to see. Some of them clearly feared that, once on the path of a development as strongly sectarian and apostolic-biblical, as replete with basic deviations as was the theologically fully developed Hussitism of the post-Basel era, the formal reunion with the Church was not going to mend the deep rupture; the union would, at best, remain superficial and in the long run the divergences would prevail. If, then, it was a question of choosing between effective reform and the unity of the Church, they were bound to vote for the latter. The reform, so they might think, could still come later if it did not come now, but the loss of unity might be (and in effect proved to be) irreparable.

If considerations like this make understandable the attitude of the

Roman Church to the Compacts, her deep reluctance to fully confirm and support this peace treaty, they cannot quite justify the high-handed way in which the Curia continued acting toward the Czechs, especially if we look at the final, tragically costly and yet unsuccessful attempt of the Holy See to force the issue by another armed intervention. But in order to see this policy correctly in its historical origin we have to consider still another important element. The very fact that it was the Council of Basel which had concluded the Compacts with the Czechs made this document not less but more suspect in the eyes of the Curia. This council, after all, had gone farther than any of its predecessors in its rebellion against Papal absolutism and its attempts to establish the quasi-parliamentary institution of the Church Council as the highest ecclesiastical authority. Thus the steady reminder of the Czechs—in their desire for a full Papal confirmation of the Compacts—that this document was granted to the Czech nation by the Fathers of the Holy Council of Basel was only apt to remind the Popes of the mid-century of the period of their deepest humiliation which now, luckily, had been completely overcome.

In Bohemia the years following the peace of 1436, while no longer a time of all-out war, nevertheless presented a chaotic picture right up to the mid-century mark. Fate was not kind to the tortured country. The restoration to the throne of Sigismund, the last of the Luxemburgs, lasted merely fifteen months: in December he died. Even in this short period, his policy as Czech King had merely contributed toward sharpening the existing religious and political antagonisms.<sup>9</sup> This was emphasized by threats which forced John Rokycana, the elected Archbishop, to seek personal safety on a castle in eastern Bohemia under the protection of some Utraquist nobles. A majority of the diet which was to elect his successor, following the lead of some of the great and powerful magnates with Ulrich of Rosenberg at their head, voted for Sigismund's son-in-law Albert of Austria (who soon afterwards also became, like Sigismund, King of the Romans and of Hungary). But a strong minority, consisting mostly of Utraquists and supported also by Rokycana, after a second election of somewhat doubtful validity, offered the crown to Casimir, the teen-aged brother of King Władysław III of Poland. And though Albert, after solemnly promising to hold and protect

<sup>9</sup> On this phase see Tomek, *Dějepis*, VI, 000.

the Compacts, succeeded in getting himself crowned—which, in the eyes of most Czechs, validated his kingship—he still had to spend most of the time of his short reign in fighting a difficult civil war against the “Polish party.” In his second kingdom, Hungary, where he had tried to organize a stronger defense against the Turkish danger, Albert died of a sudden illness in October 1439.<sup>10</sup>

The premature death of this young Habsburg ruler—a man of considerable qualities—left Bohemia and his other realms, Hungary and Austria, in a greatly disorganized state. For the moment there was no “natural heir” in sight. True, the Queen, Sigismund’s daughter Elizabeth, was pregnant and four months later, in February 1440, gave birth to a boy, Ladislav, usually called Posthumus. But the Czech estates (unlike the Hungarians who soon had the infant crowned) were wary of electing a King who for a long time to come would be incapable of effective rulership. They tried to get around the “natural” succession by electing as King a German prince, Duke Albert of Bavaria, a man who was well known and liked in the country because he had been raised at the court of King Wenceslas IV and spoke Czech fluently. But he declined.<sup>11</sup>

Only after thirteen years’ interregnum was young Ladislav accepted and crowned in Prague in October 1453. The first ten years of this period—1440–1450—were so full of strife and turmoil that eventually the longing of the people—really all the people—for an effective ruler able to preserve peace became overwhelming. The man who was strong and wise enough to fulfill these hopes was sure to gain ascendancy. George of Poděbrady turned out to be this man.

George came from the old baronial family of Kunštát that had its roots in Moravia, where it still held some possessions in the earlier fifteenth century. But already in the fourteenth century it had acquired some important holdings in Bohemia—foremost among them the strong castle and town of Poděbrady on the Elbe river, some thirty-five miles due east of Prague, important because it controlled a much travelled river crossing and by it passed the main road from Prague to the regional center of eastern Bohemia: Hradec Králové. The first of the Kunštáts to hold the castle was George’s great-grandfather Boček, a man who expressed his feelings for his nation—the

<sup>10</sup> Albert’s short reign is the subject of a careful monograph by A. Wostry, *König Albrecht II* (Prager Studien auf dem Gebiet der Geschichtswissenschaften), Prague, 1906–1907. See also Urbánek, *Věk*, I, 227–456.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 514–542.

*lingua Bohemica*—by writing letters in Czech instead of the usual Latin.<sup>12</sup> His son, another Boček, George's grandfather, was the first Hussite of the family; he can be found in the first row of Hus's adherents among the high nobility, both before and after the death of the great reformer. Two of his sons, Victorin and Hynek, were among the most active protagonists of the Hussite Revolution. Both of them early became friends, followers, and close allies of the great Žižka, feeling no compunction to put their forces at the disposal—and themselves under the command—of a simple squire.<sup>13</sup> Of the two, Victorin was the more brilliant soldier as well as the more politically consistent. He was at Žižka's side in some of the important battles fought during the Revolution, notably the victorious campaign which in the winter of 1421-1422 drove King Sigismund out of Bohemia, and the great victory won by Žižka at Malešov over the conservative coalition in 1424. He helped Žižka effectively, especially by putting his fairly extensive holdings in eastern Bohemia—among them the towns of Pardubice, Skalice, and Náchod—at Žižka's disposal when the old general reorganized his military and political basis in cooperation with the towns of the Orebite brotherhood—the same religious-military brotherhood and field army that, after Žižka's death, called themselves Orphans. Victorin was one of the men who stayed with Žižka at the time of his death in October 1424, and remained closely allied with the Orphans to his own death—from an illness—in 1427.

Whether Žižka really was the godfather of Victorin's only son, George (or Jiří), will probably never be known with complete certainty. But it is not likely. In view of Žižka's itinerary in April 1420—the month in which George was born and baptized—he could only have been present at the baptism if the child's first days were lived in Horažďovice—one of the number of Bohemian towns which made this claim. It seems more probable that he was born in the castle of Poděbrady, where Victorin could leave his wife—Anna, from the great baronial house of Wartenberg—with some confidence for her safety. Two dates for the birth appear in the sources: the 6th and the 21st of April, but the earlier date appears slightly better docu-

<sup>12</sup> This, at least, can be concluded from an agreement concluded with him at Poděbrady in 1370 by a Prague citizen. See *Český listář*, ed. Václavek, Prague, 1949, p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> On their history during the Hussite revolution, see Heymann, *Žižka, passim*, especially 291, 364, 387ff., 409f., 459f.

mented, and it may well be that the second one is really that of the baptism.<sup>14</sup>

At the time his father died the young George was not quite 7 years old. At first his father's oldest brother, Boček, became his warden, then, after his early death (before 1430), one of his father's Moravian cousins, Heral of Kunštát. Heral was a zealous Hussite like Victorin, but in 1434, in the great battle of Lipany in which the field armies of the Taborite and Orphan brotherhoods stood against the great majority of the barons and knights and the armies of Prague, Heral fought on the latter side. With him fought, so we hear, his young ward.<sup>15</sup> Having grown up in times of war, to be ready for war was probably the main goal of his upbringing. Certainly George's participation in this battle, if we take it for a fact as it probably was, had very little significance for the battle or its political consequences. But it must have had some considerable significance for his own development and political outlook. He long continued to look at Tábor as a potential enemy.

George probably had little formal education. He knew, of course, how to read and write, but gave the impression that he was essentially limited to his Czech mother language. He does not seem to have known Latin at all, and his German seemed weak enough to make him, in later times, use an interpreter whenever he had to conduct business of importance with people who did not speak Czech. It was a method which also had its advantages, especially if you had already caught the gist of the other person's arguments. While the interpreter spoke you could consider your answer with care.

As for the rest we know little. Clearly young George grew up very conscious of belonging to partisan groups. He was a Czech at a time when the great majority of all Czechs fought against people of other nations, especially Germans and Hungarians, hardly ever losing a battle in this long and bloody war. He could not fail to be proud of being a man of this warrior-race. He was a Hussite, one

<sup>14</sup> On the date and place of George's birth see Urbánek, *Věk*, I, 209ff. Also, V. Pinkava, "O rodišti krále Jiřího Poděbradského," *ČMM (Časopis Matice Moravské)*, XXIX, Brno, 1905, 392ff., and A. Sedláček's answer in the same journal, XXX, 1906, 54ff.

<sup>15</sup> The fact has been doubted, but seems nevertheless correct. See J. Tenora, "Z mladých let pana Jiřího z Kunštátu," *ČČM (Časopis musea Království českého)*, LXIX, Prague, 1825, 290ff., and Urbánek, *Věk*, I, 218, 219. It is, of course, impossible to consider him, as has occasionally been done, as one of the leaders of the victorious army.

whose father and grandfather had already expressed their belief in the religious reform by taking the communion in both kinds—a symbol of the Law of Christ and Truth of Christ as God had revealed it to His faithful Czechs. It was another strong bond which George would never shake off to the end of his days. Finally he was a baron, one of the great lords of the realm, and he soon, at 21 years, married one of the great heiresses of the kingdom, Kunhuta of Sternberg.

His social standing might have made him proud, yet it failed to make him conceited. He must have learned at an early time that to be a lord did not necessarily mean being a better Czech or a better Utraquist Christian than other people of less lofty origin. He knew that his father had fought with Žižka, nay, under Žižka, and that Žižka had not been a lord but merely a squire. He knew men who, without even the more modest coat of arms of a squire, might wield power by the strength of their personality and of their word. Such a one was John Rokycana, the great Utraquist cleric, a man of his father's generation with whose whole life and work his own became most intimately intertwined. Certainly the times in which George grew up—hard times as years of bitter warfare usually are—were also times that could teach a gifted youngster a great deal; in the first place this experience perhaps emphasized the need to look at the world and his surroundings not merely through the eyes of a narrow caste conception. If he wanted to get along—and this he surely wanted, being ambitious from the beginning—he had to rely on himself and his gifts, had to develop his understanding of society and of people, and had, if possible, to find a good teacher. He found—or was found by—him soon: in the person of Lord Hynce Ptáček of Pirkstein.

During the short reigns of Sigismund and Albert the Czech nation lost some of the most important and effective leaders that the revolution had brought to the fore. The greatest of them was perhaps William Kostka of Postupice, a man whose statesmanship had given him a position of great responsibility as a diplomat and soldier in various places of the war, but who had become even more eminent as the foremost layman among the Czech delegates to the Council of Basel.<sup>16</sup> He died in battle, in the attempt to defeat a separatist rebellion of Hradec Králové, in November 1436. He was followed, in

<sup>16</sup> On the early phases of Kostka's life see Heymann, *Žižka, passim*, especially 338, 417f.

January 1438, by Diviš Bořek of Miletínek, a nobleman who had started as a friend and comrade-in-arms of Žižka, had then turned against him in the bloody civil war of 1423-1424, and had finally, as commander in chief of the army of the lords and Praguers, defeated Žižka's heirs, the field armies of the brotherhoods, at Lipany in 1434.<sup>17</sup> During the last phase of his life he had returned to a vigorously Hussite attitude and had taken a strong stand against Sigismund's attempts at undermining the Utraquist position. It was he who took Rokycana under his protection in his castle of Kunětická Hora.

Both of these men, characteristically, had not originally belonged to the baronial class but were knights by birth, though they had risen so high in the councils of the nation that in their case the question of caste was hardly considered, especially as long as the revolutionary tremors had not fully subsided and the social structure had retained a certain measure of mobility. Now, however, as their death coincided with a steady return to more static conditions, it was again members of the baronial class who took over the leadership of the nation, which the once so powerful cities had lost at Lipany. The first among the magnates were three men: Ulrich of Rosenberg, Menhart of Hradec, and Ptáček of Pirkstein. Of these three, only Ptáček had grown up as a thorough Catholic. It is ironical that it was he, eventually, who upheld Hussitism during the years when it seemed rather weak and the Catholic countermovement strong.

Of the leaders of the Catholic magnates, Rosenberg was the greatest, the richest, in some ways the cleverest, and by all odds the most unscrupulous. His changeover from the Hussitism of his adolescent years to sharp antagonism against all Hussite groups had no strong religious foundation. His main motive was the wish for material gains. No other man profited as abundantly and relentlessly from the chance to appropriate the landed estates which the Church had lost as a result of the Revolution. Especially in his private "Kingdom," the southern-most region of Bohemia, he managed to round out his originally scattered possessions to truly princely proportions, and for the purpose of acquiring these huge territories he did not mind forging royal donations and other beneficial documents on quite a large scale.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.* 363ff., 383ff., 397f., 468f.

<sup>18</sup> On Ulrich of Rosenberg, see Urbánek, *Věk*, I, 175-186; Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého*, 2nd ed., Prague, 1877, IV, 1, 43f. (in German *Geschichte von Böhmen* IV, 1857, 1, 49f., and

Ulrich has, rather fittingly, been compared to the Italian Renaissance princes of his time in his brutal lust for wealth and power which did not stop short of murder, but he could not display it with the same recklessness that was typical for some of the Sforzas or Borgias, partly perhaps because, for all his ambitions, he never had quite the nerve that characterized his Italian peers. Also, in Bohemia, even in the time of troubles that filled the great interregnum after 1439, the moral standards, under the impact of the Hussite reformation, were stricter than in many other European countries. But Rosenberg managed, for a long time, to appear as the true spokesman for the kingdom in its relations with the outer world, especially with the Roman Curia and with Frederick III, the Habsburg prince who in 1440 had followed Albert II as King of the Romans.

Ulrich's main goal thereby was to prevent the establishment of a stable and effective government inside Bohemia which might have limited or stopped the steady aggrandizement of his possessions, his wealth, and his power. It might also, on the basis of a compromise with Rome, have returned to the Church at least some of the rich properties acquired by, among many others, the Rosenbergs. It is for this rather than for religious reasons that he regularly warned the Holy See against any concessions to the Utraquists, especially against the confirmation of the Compacts and of Rokycana's archi-episcopal position. Repeatedly he voted in public, at some of the meetings of the diet, for petitions demanding such recognition; but he followed this up by secret councils to the contrary. In the same way he had openly voted for the election of Albert of Bavaria as King of Bohemia, only to threaten this prince secretly with the most dire warnings against acceptance of his election. Whenever possible Rosenberg boycotted the diets which might establish a more permanent and effective order for the country. But by these tactics he eventually weakened his own influence, at least in the later phases of the interregnum.

Rosenberg was, throughout the time of the interregnum, the undisputed leader of the Catholics. Their actual number was not very imposing, as the great masses of the Czech people—especially among the townsmen and peasants, but also in the main among the lower nobility—still considered themselves as adherents of the reformed

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*passim*). On his earlier development see also Heymann, *Žižka*, 170f., and *passim*. His documentary forgeries were proved by V. Schmidt, "Die Fälschung von Kaiser- und Königsurkunden durch Ulrich von Rosenberg," *MVGDB*, vol. 32, 317ff.; vol. 33, 181ff., 1894-1895.

creed. Only two of the leading cities of Bohemia had, throughout the Revolution, been able to maintain their Catholic character under the control of a partly German town aristocracy: Pilsen in the West (with a cluster of smaller places and estates of its region forming the so-called Pilsen Landfrieden), and Budweis, in the South, a place which had always stood directly under the protection of its great neighbor Rosenberg (even though there had frequently been conflicts between them). Indirectly four of the main cities of Moravia, Brno, Olomouc, Jihlava, and Znojmo, could be considered as followers of Rosenberg for the same reasons as Pilsen and Budweis. The baronial families who were—in whole or in parts—strictly Catholic numbered about twelve, foremost among them the lords of Riesen-berg, of Švamberg, of Plauen, of Gutstein, of Lobkovice, and of Michalovice. Of the better known, wealthier, and politically active gentry families none stood under Ulrich's immediate "command."

Actually Ulrich's political power was much greater than this list might indicate. A good deal of it came to him indirectly, through his strong personal influence on the second man of this very unofficial triumvirate: Menhart of Hradec.<sup>19</sup>

Menhart was not a strong personality. On the contrary: it was rather his lack of strength, his general mediocrity, which resulted in the power he possessed. When in October 1436 the Emperor Sigismund, after his restoration as King of Bohemia, appointed a new slate of leading court officials, he made Menhart Lord High Burgrave of Prague. This was the highest of all the offices of the kingdom and gave the holder traditionally a position which implied high military command and even a sort of regency in times of the monarch's absence from the country. His special powers included the administration of the two most important castles of the kingdom: the Hradčany, which, with its great fortresses, palaces, and churches formed both symbolically and strategically a stronghold dominating the capital and, therewith, in a sense the country; and the Karlstein, where, among other valuables, some of the most important constitutional documents as well as the crowns and crown jewels of the kingdom were kept—things without whose use, for instance, a valid coronation of a King of Bohemia was impossible. Sigismund, in 1436, would probably have preferred to appoint a Catholic to this supremely important position, but was afraid that such a measure would lead to widespread annoyance and resistance among the Utra-

<sup>19</sup> See Urbánek, *Vžk*, I, 201ff., and Palacký IV, 1, 40f. (in German, 45f.).

quist majority. Thus he picked Menhart of Hradec, one of the most conservative leaders of the Calixtine aristocracy, who, in his religious tendencies, was influenced by such masters as Christian of Prachatic, Prokop of Pilsen, and John Přebíram. All of them had a strong tendency to return to an almost completely orthodox Catholicism—that is to abandon all the reforms with the single exception of the communion in the two kinds. Toward the end of his life Lord Menhart did, indeed, abandon even this last symbol of Hussitism. But Sigismund's choice was not only determined by Menhart's—from the Catholic point of view—relatively innocuous religious position, but by his total lack of color or vigor which would make him a fairly willing tool of the Emperor's policy. Menhart did, indeed, find it difficult ever to make a strong, independent decision. While, in a negative way, he could occasionally be stubborn and headstrong, he always seems to have needed someone to prompt him toward any sort of positive action. This someone, then, during the interregnum, was his friend Ulrich of Rosenberg.

The elements of the nation which, at the beginning of the interregnum, recognized Menhart's leadership included, first of all, the city of Prague, as well as a few other royal towns such as Kouřim and Slaný; a very considerable part of the high nobility, which included the great houses of Hasenburg, Wartenberg, Kolovrat, Lichtenburg, and Waldstein; as well as a few of the important leaders of the gentry, in particular John Smiřický, Jakoubek of Vřesovice, and Nicholas Sokol of Lamberg. This was undoubtedly an enormous succor for Rosenberg's policy, though already in the early forties this support began to crumble as more and more people recognized that Menhart's leadership was not what they had expected it to be: the defense of a moderate but determined Utraquism and of a restoration of national strength and unity. The group which profited from this drifting away of the more consciously Hussite elements found its leader in a man whose policy, as late as in 1436, was still not too distinct from that of Menhart of Hradec, but whose stature—alone of the three leading men—grew to be equal to the tasks of reorganizing the nation: Hynce Ptáček of Pirkstein.<sup>20</sup>

Lord Ptáček came from a branch of the baronial house of Lipé and Dubá, a family with great holdings especially in northern Bohemia. He was younger than his two rivals and had not come to

<sup>20</sup> On Ptáček see Urbánek, *Věk* I, 203ff., 901ff., and Palacký, *Dejiny*, IV, 1, 41f., 101f. (German, 46f., 115f.).

the attention of his contemporaries during the Hussite Wars. At Lipany he was one of the many lords who fought the brotherhoods, and the first task in which he occupied a leading position had an equally tragic character. It was he whom Sigismund entrusted, in the summer of 1437, with the conquest of the castle of Sion. In his stronghold John Roháč of Dubá, one of Žižka's most faithful lieutenants and successors, continued his solitary resistance against the hated Emperor with a small group of followers when all others had recognized Sigismund's kingship. Ptáček was successful in his enterprise but could hardly enjoy his victory when Roháč, his own kinsman, was taken to Prague and there, despite strong protests from the Utraquist nobility, tortured and hanged like a common criminal.<sup>21</sup> It may well have been this experience which induced Ptáček to quit the "Austrian party" and to become, after Sigismund's death, a vigorous defender of the Polish candidacy.<sup>22</sup>

Ptáček was a short man, rather fat, and bald at an early age, generally a friendly fellow with a lot of merriness and laughter in him, but with a very keen power of observing and analyzing people and situations, quick and strong in his decisions and soon generally respected. He could play the political game shrewdly, but he used it as a statesman, never for petty, always for important causes. His patriotism was never questioned by anybody, but it would seem that his religious conviction, too, once it was fully developed, was more sincere and less subject to the influence of opportunism than was the case with so many of his peers. Once he had made fully clear his position—and its difference from that of Menhart of Hradec—his appearance on the Bohemian scene acted like a catalyst. From now on the great majority of the people—a considerable part of the high nobility but a much larger proportion of the gentry and the towns—was enclined to follow his leadership. His greatest asset thereby was his close alliance with John Rokycana, the elected archbishop, still and for a long time to come the strongest spiritual influence in Hussite Bohemia. The cooperation between the two men seems to have been complete.

Rokycana, after a short stay on the castle of Kunětická Hora, had taken up his residence at Hradec Králové, the city which had once been the center of Žižka's Orebite brotherhood. This organization had, after the battle of Lipany, disappeared as a political entity (un-

<sup>21</sup> For Roháč and his end, F. Lupínek, *Jan Roháč z Dubé*, Kutná Hora, 1930, pp. 30-43.

<sup>22</sup> See Urbánek, *Věk*, I, 241f.

like their allies, the Taborite brotherhood, which still survived), and its religious adherents, concentrated in eastern Bohemia, had little difficulty in joining the Utraquist center under Rokycana's leadership. Rokycana thereby became the undisputed head of the Hussites of most of eastern Bohemia and indeed of many other Hussite groups all over the country, with the exception only of the dwindling remainders of the Taborite brotherhood.

It was in the East that Ptáček could now more firmly establish his political leadership. This was officially recognized when in March 1440 the district assemblies of four eastern Bohemian districts or "landfrieden," Hradec Králové, Chrudim, Čáslav, and Kouřim, elected him as their head captain. To those four a fifth was soon added, the district of Boleslav, where one of the two local captains was the young George of Poděbrady.

The creation of these landfrieden districts was, in a way, an emergency measure, resulting from the renewed break-down of all central authority.<sup>23</sup> Here, at least, was a way of maintaining law and order in limited areas if not nationally. But by combining their forces the five eastern districts created a nucleus of cohesive political power from which, eventually, a national consolidation would be possible. Here, then, lay the main significance of Ptáček's rather short career as leader of his party.

His first major victory had been achieved even before the formal alliance of the districts when, in January 1440, a diet was called to Prague, in which all the three major groups accepted a "Letter of Pacification" ("list mírný"). This document, which bore the signatures even of Rosenberg and his followers, went very far in proclaiming the basic political principles of the party of Ptáček as those of the whole nation.<sup>24</sup> It demanded full acceptance of, and support for, the Compacts; the confirmation and consecration by the Curia, of John Rokycana as Archbishop of Prague; and finally the annulment of measures which Albert II during his Bohemian kingship had taken against the opposition party, that is mainly against Ptáček and his followers. The only important price Ptáček paid for this victory was his readiness to postpone, for the time being, the election of a King.

The years that followed did bring a few further steps toward con-

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 481-495.

<sup>24</sup> See its text in *AČ*, I, 245ff. Palacký *Dějiny*, (German, IV, 1, 13ff.) somewhat strangely translates it as "Sühnbrief." For Urbánek's comment see *Věk*, I, 468ff.

solidation, but against great obstacles and with many interrupting setbacks. The very next year, 1441, was full of internal struggles, frequently bloody ones that can only be characterized as rather confused civil wars with limited forces and in limited, but changing theaters. What makes the picture so confused is the fact that as often as not the struggle was a triangular one. There was never, it is true, any conflict between Menhart of Hradec and Ulrich of Rosenberg; on the contrary—Menhart's dependence on Ulrich became even closer. The third force, however, which at times fought against one party, at times against the other and occasionally against both of them, was Tabor.<sup>25</sup>

The term "Taborites" had since the early phase of the Hussite Revolution, implied a movement rather than just a city. This movement contained the most dynamic, most radical wing of Hussitism, both in religious and socio-political terms, and had rallied to its views and policies a number of noblemen, a considerable part of the cities of southern and southwestern Bohemia, and much of the politically conscious elements of the peasantry. The Taborite brotherhood had been a theocratic commonwealth dominated by priests, and even its famed and formidable field army, originally found and led by John Žižka, had become the instrument of great priestly leaders such as Prokop the Bald. The settlement of Tabor itself (originally Hradiště), begun as strongly fortified headquarters of the movement, had meantime developed into a city, with a regular town constitution, a middle class, and some small industry. Throughout most of the revolutionary years the Taborite federation was one of the great powers of the country, especially as long as it was closely allied with the other brotherhood—the Orebiters or Orphans of eastern Bohemia. The battle of Lipany destroyed much, but not all of this strength. It is characteristic of the awe in which Tabor was still held by most of its former enemies (and especially by its nearest neighbor, Lord Ulrich of Rosenberg) that in the fall of 1436 the Emperor Sigismund found it advisable to conclude a very special arrangement with Tabor which gave the fortress-town some limited guarantee for the unmolested maintenance of its—still strongly deviating—religious

<sup>25</sup> On Tabor and the Taborite movement there exists an enormous literature. Much of it can be found in the bibliography of my "*Žižka*." For newer publications see Josef Macek's above cited work on Tabor, which is rather dogmatic in its Marxian approach but makes profitable use of much new material; and, for the earlier phases of the movement, two articles by Howard Kaminsky, "Hussite Radicalism and the Origins of Tabor," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, X, 1956, and "Chiliasm and the Hussite Revolution," *Church History*, XXVI, 1957, I.

dogma and ritual, and in addition gave it all the rights and freedoms of a royal city.<sup>26</sup>

In the postwar era the influence of Tabor had begun to dwindle. Some of the allied cities which had long followed its leadership fell away. There was political pressure from the two other camps. But there was also the appeal to religious unification from both these camps. For most of the people who had ever belonged to the Taborite federation the orthodox Catholicism of the Rosenberg party held little attraction, but the Utraquist Church under the increasingly firm leadership of Rokycana could present better claims to speak in the name of the Czech-Hussite tradition. In this twofold struggle—the civil war which was rather inconclusive in 1441 but flamed up anew two years later, and the fight over religious issues—Tabor resisted bravely but with slowly weakening power. Eventually she was forced to conclude an armistice and agreed to submit the religious issues to a great synod held at Kutná Hora in July 1443. Here Tabor was represented by two priests who had been her leading clerics for 23 years, indeed since the earliest times of the Taborite commonwealth: Nicholas of Pelhřimov, whom the Taborites, in 1420, had elected as their bishop and who ever since was known under the nickname “Biskupec,” a man of great erudition who can be considered as Tabor’s leading theologian;<sup>27</sup> and Wenceslas Koranda the Elder, whose gifts, in the first place, were those of a preacher and religious-political propagandist.<sup>28</sup> Against them stood Rokycana, supported, this time, by a man who had only recently been his adversary: John Příbram, for a long time the leader of the most conservative wing of the Utraquist Church.<sup>29</sup> The main issue between the two Hussite groups was the understanding of the Eucharist.<sup>30</sup>

The Taborites had, by this time, accepted the teaching of the group usually called Pikharts, that is they claimed that in the bread and wine Christ was present “*sacramentaliter*” and “*spiritualiter*,” not, however, as Rokycana believed, “*substantialiter*” and “*naturaliter*.” The whole disputation about the real presence had a remarkable

<sup>26</sup> See *AČ*, III, 450ff.

<sup>27</sup> See Heymann, “*Žižka*,” 172ff.; Bartoš, *Světcí a kacíři*, Prague, 1949, 175ff., and Pekař, *Žižka a jeho doba*, I, Prague, 1927, 125ff. See also Z. Nejedlý, *Dějiny husitského zpěvu*, 2nd ed., Prague, 1955, IV, Taboři, 199–203.

<sup>28</sup> See Heymann, *Žižka*, 80ff. and *passim*, and Nejedlý, *op.cit.*, 205f.

<sup>29</sup> On Příbram, see J. Prokeš, *M. Prokop z Plzně* (Husitský Archiv, III), Prague, 1927.

<sup>30</sup> About this phase of events and its ideological background, see Z. Nejedlý, *Prameny k synodám strany Pražské a Tábořské v letech 1441–1444*, Prague, 1900, and Urbánek, *Věk I*, 812–883.

similarity with the much more famous "Religionsgespräch," which was to take place, eighty-six years later, in Marburg between Zwingli and Luther. The final decision about whose views were to prevail came only through the proceedings of a great diet held in Prague in January 1444. The estates found that Rokycana's teachings were to be accepted as "more reliable, better and securer."<sup>31</sup> The Taborites did not, as had been hoped, submit to this verdict. But it had an important effect on their future and that of the country. Tabor was, from now on, almost completely isolated. The Utraquists, on the other hand, gained enormously in unity and in national influence.

The practical elimination of Tabor as a power which could put a strong weight to either side now left the two main parties face to face for the decisive struggle. Who would retain the upper hand—Ulrich of Rosenberg or Ptáček of Pirkstein? Ptáček seemed to have gained more in the domestic field, but Ulrich had more support outside Bohemia, notably through his close and friendly relationship with the King of the Romans, Frederick III. The King, however, who was having troubles of his own, especially in Austria and in his relationship to his brother Archduke Albert, had no intention of getting too much involved in the thorny Bohemian problems.<sup>32</sup>

The final decisions about Bohemia's fate were clearly due to be taken in the future, and within the country. At this stage it seemed almost certain that Ptáček would be the man to take them, by consolidating and widening his own leadership and thereby restoring political stability essentially on the basis of the Letter of Pacification of 1440. But just now, in August 1444, he was suddenly taken ill and died. It was a grave loss for the country, one that could easily have been considered irreplaceable, another link in the chain of misfortunes which had befallen the country so often in this century. Yet for once things turned out better than expected. For the man who could replace—and more than replace—Lord Ptáček had already made, in a modest way, his appearance on the scene of history. It was George, aged twenty-four, Lord of Kunštát and Poděbrady, and captain of the landfrieden-district of Boleslav.

<sup>31</sup> See the resolution in Nejedlý, *op. cit.* 108ff.

<sup>32</sup> See Urbánek, *Vžk.* I, 618–627, 630–648.



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## CHAPTER 2

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### THE FIRST GREAT DUEL: PODĚBRADY VERSUS ROSENBERG

THE LEADER of Bohemia's Catholic party, Lord Ulrich of Rosenberg, had been a representative figure even as a young man in his twenties. Throughout the Hussite Revolution he had been King Sigismund's strongest partisan, and a good deal of the military struggle had been a sort of duel between him and John Žižka.<sup>1</sup> Many of the people who had fought with or against him were now dead, and Tabor, though still extant as a local power and a religious movement, had no longer its former significance. Indeed a good deal of the class character of the original struggle had disappeared with the development that had taken place since the battle of Lipany, and the Hussite side stood, ever since the rise of Ptáček, likewise under the leadership of a magnate. But there was a considerable difference, nevertheless, between the ideas, goals, and methods of Rosenberg and those of the young man who now represented the party of Utraquism: George of Poděbrady.

They had a few things in common. Both came from the same social background, and very likely were relatives.<sup>2</sup> Both were clever politicians and highly interested in strengthening the economic basis of their political position. This indeed, was a practice without which they could hardly have maintained their leading roles. They would need strong and permanent sources of income especially for military purposes.

But this exhausts the similarities. The differences were far more significant. Rosenberg identified the material interests of his class with those of himself and of his family, and saw them in the narrowest sense: any thing he could gain would have to be taken away

<sup>1</sup> See Heymann, *Žižka*, 170ff., 183, 408f.

<sup>2</sup> The relationship is not quite undisputed, but Palacký's version (according to which Ulrich's wife, Catherine of Wartenberg, was a sister of George's mother, Anna) is generally accepted. See his *Dějiny*, IV, 1, 104 n. 114 (German, p. 118 n. 115).

from others, and this was in perfect order. To gain as much as possible from others was easiest in times in which the feudal anarchy was virtually unchecked by any strong national organization. This is the real key to all his actions, rather than any religious fanaticism; though it would be convenient enough at times to play the savior of Catholic Christianity against Hussite subversion.

George of Poděbrady, on the other hand, had a remarkable ability—remarkable at least in relation to the time in which he lived—to identify himself with the interests of the larger communities to which he belonged; this notwithstanding the careful and successful management of the finances of his family. These communities were, first of all, the Boleslav landfrieden whose leader he had been, together with John Smiřický, for the last few years; the union of the five eastern landfrieden, which had elected him their chief captain, without a dissenting voice, immediately after the death of Ptáček; the Hussite-Utraquist Church, in which he had been born and raised and with whose leader in eastern Bohemia, John Rokycana, he cooperated very closely; but above all the nation—very much in the modern sense of the word, as the community of all the people of the kingdom, especially those of the three estates represented in the diets—barons, gentry, and cities, with the peasants given rather less consideration except, occasionally, in a vague humanitarian way; the nation, then, emphatically including the two main religious parties.

While Rosenberg tried to play the sincere defender of the Catholic faith with an hypocrisy made obvious by his vast acquisition of Church estates which he was most unwilling to return, George was sincere in showing that he was not—and could not be—a religious fanatic. Yet if some historians have tried to characterize him as a man without any real religious beliefs, feelings, and ties, they were clearly mistaken.<sup>3</sup> Indeed it is his greatest antagonist among the Catholic clergy, Aeneas Sylvius, who impressively testifies to the contrary. He tells us in some detail about a conversation, held by George in Breslau around Christmas 1454, with one of the actors or court jesters of King Ladislav's retinue who asked why, against the usage of nearly all nations and princes, he choose to remain in the camp of Rokycana and the Utraquist schismatics. The main part of George's answer, as quoted by Aeneas Sylvius, was: "Everyone celebrates the church ritual according to what he believes. We offer our sacrifice

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Bachmann, "Ein Jahr böhmischer Geschichte," *AÖG*, LIV, Vienna, 1876, 132., and Voigt, "Georg von Böhmen, der Hussitenkönig," *HZ*, V, Munich, 1861, 429.

and worship as we deem them to be pleasing to God, nor does it stand in our arbitrary choice to believe what we choose. The human mind is, whether we want it or not, subject to the impact of the most powerful arguments, even though according to the nature of the individual one man may be more fully led thereby, another may partly escape this influence. I am fully convinced of the religious truth as it was taught me by my own priests. If I tried to follow yours, I might perhaps manage to deceive men, to the detriment of my soul; but God who looks into the innermost heart I cannot deceive.”<sup>4</sup> These words are in many ways characteristic for George. In accordance with them he never claimed any independence of religious judgment based on theological erudition; but he was always ready to listen to arguments. While his religious policy was subject, especially in his later years, to constant and often fierce pressure, and while he could hardly avoid having moments of weakness, he still managed to combine faith in the religious ideas of his grandfather and father, his teacher Ptáček, and his great clerical adviser Rokycana with a serious, responsible attitude of tolerance toward the Catholic minority of his nation, many of whose members, including their bishops, he consulted regularly. We shall, of course, discuss his religious policy in some detail, including his regrettable, yet from his point of view unavoidable, harshness toward the more radical forms of Hussite sectarianism.

The situation into which George had to grow up was so complex that he could never have had any success at all if he had not had a measure of shrewdness. In most phases of history, and quite especially in such very dynamic ones characterized by rapid changes, the statesman has also to be a politician, the lion also to be a fox, to achieve anything worth while. George had this quality. That he could use clever manoeuvres, not entirely devoid of ruse and deception, and occasionally of harshness, has been held against him by those countless enemies who have left a much larger heritage of records than his friends. Even Palacký, the historian who first and most impressively established George's claim to greatness, has found that by the occasional choice of such means he fell somewhat short of the moral stature of Ptáček of Pirkstein.<sup>5</sup> Yet we shall come upon

<sup>4</sup> See Aeneas Sylvius, *Historia Bohemica*, ch. 62, p. 157, also almost identically in Eschenloer, G., I, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Palacký, *Dějiny*, IV, 1, 131 (German, 149). This is perhaps the only instance in Palacký's work where one may wonder whether he has been quite fair to his hero, or rather whether he has not given Ptáček more credit than he deserved.

more than one occasion where we are also struck by opposite traits and attitudes: an unjustified trust in the willingness of other people to keep their word; an aversion against the harsh and brutal war effort, in a struggle forced on him against his wishes; an attitude quite astonishing for one whose initial success was, beside his impressive personality and the clarity and strength of his basic political conceptions, also based on military gifts and successes achieved early in his life.

There is no question that George made a strong impression on the people he met. The very fact that the lords and knights controlling the eastern Bohemian districts, among them some much older men of high standing and considerable prestige, elected him without any hesitation as their leader, proves it sufficiently. Aeneas Sylvius describes him as "a man of short stature, rather stocky frame, white complexion, with a strong light in his eyes, and with very pleasant manners. He is infected by the Hussite error, but otherwise devoted to justice and virtue."<sup>6</sup>

The description of George's physical appearance fits in well with the pictorial records that have come down to us, showing him with a roundish face, a rather prominent nose, a wide, but strong chin, expressive eyes and an ample, drooping sort of moustache.<sup>7</sup> Despite his short stature he seems to have impressed people as having great dignity and authority, and at the same time a natural and effective affability. He thus found it easy to win people of all stations over to his side, even men who had first met him reluctantly and with strong reservations regarding his political or religious views and aims. Indeed it seems to have been almost impossible for any of his more important contemporaries to look across to him with cool and distant neutrality. If they were not his followers, if, in particular, they had turned away from him, they tended to become his bitter enemies.

As he was a child of his time so he was prepared to fulfill the needs of his times. In those years, conditions did not yet, in Bohemia, favor the flowering of arts or sciences, great buildings, great teaching. Nor were these things foremost in George's mind. He would hardly have known how to be a Renaissance patron of the Italian variety, (while his Hungarian son-in-law, Matthias, could play this

<sup>6</sup> *Historica rerum Friderici III imperatoris*, in Kollar, ed., *Analecta Monumentorum omnis aevi Vindo-bonensia*, Vienna, 1762, II, 181. In later utterances, especially in his Commentaries, this friendly evaluation gives way to harsh judgments.

<sup>7</sup> Urbánek, *Věk*, III, 321 and illustrations in this book.

role to perfection). George's interests were, in the first place, severely practical, as they were concerned with the political and economical recovery and survival of the country. His methods, accordingly, were not based on any general ideas or philosophies but on trial and error. And for a long time these methods served him exceedingly well.

In the first phases of the duel between George and Ulrich, the advantages seemed all to lie with Ulrich. It was much easier to negate and sabotage than to take constructive action. The goal of the Poděbradian party was the reconstruction of a strong, orderly state. As the majority of the nation was Hussite, this would also depend on the construction of a strong, orderly regime for the Utraquist Church. The need, thus, was for a monarch as recognized head of the state—no one seriously dreamed of republicanism on a national level—and for a recognized head of the Church. In the first case it was still a matter of finding the person; in the second, one of having the only possible choice confirmed by Rome. Both tasks, whose solution had repeatedly but unsuccessfully been tried by Ptáček, were now again faced by George with purposive energy. But at first Ulrich found it as easy to cross him as it had been in the case of Ptáček.

This play was first acted late in 1444. A diet, called to Český Brod on the insistence of the Poděbradian party, decided unanimously to ask the Pope, Eugene IV, for the confirmation of Rokycana, and to make all necessary preparations for having the boy Ladislav sent to Bohemia so he could be crowned.<sup>8</sup> The chances for the fulfillment of the second demand were none too good as long as Frederick III, the King of the Romans, Ladislav's second cousin once removed, and his guardian, kept the child under strict supervision at his own court. The chances for the confirmation of Rokycana, on the other hand, might have been better at this time than at almost any other time before or after. The reason for this was the renewed papal schism which had come about through the conciliar struggle. Pope Eugene IV had ordered the dissolution of the Council of Basel, which in turn had deposed the Pope and elected Prince Amadeus of Savoy as Felix V. Now, four years after Felix's election, the chances for a victory of the Basel Council over Eugene did not seem very bright. Yet as long as the majority of the German princes maintained a

<sup>8</sup> See *AČ*, I, 292f.; *Starší letopisové čeští* (Old Czech Annalists), ed. Palacký and re-edited by J. Charvát in *Dílo F. Palackého*, II, Prague, 1941 (hereafter cited as *SLČP*), 127; Palacký *Dějiny*, IV, 1, 108ff. (German, 124ff.), and Urbánek, *Věk*, II, 33ff.

strict and concerted neutrality, a firm support from the Bohemian estates would have been a valuable help for Eugene for which he might have paid a price. But this would have presupposed that the official policy of the diet was maintained by the dominant power behind it. Instead two secret missions sent to Rome by the Catholic party in 1445 expressly repudiated the support they had given to the resolutions of the diet and solemnly warned the Pope not to confirm the Archbishop-elect. The second message was signed by Ulrich and six other lords, also by three of the leading knights led rather strangely by John Smiřický, once one of the leaders of the Hussite gentry, but now playing a very obscure role.<sup>9</sup>

For Eugene IV these messages were highly welcome. Where, otherwise, he would have stood under a rather effective pressure he was now free to try his own devices. He would, so he assured the Catholics in a message dated May 15, even before he received the second information, soon give the country an archbishop, but one against whom nobody among the people of the kingdom had any objections. He knew, of course, that this was an utter impossibility, but the promise was a way out of an impasse, and the whole exchange of messages showed at least that he was in no immediate danger of a Bohemian recognition for Felix's papacy. To avoid such a danger the Roman diplomacy was anyhow very active at this time, making use especially of the services of a man who had long stood on the side of the Council but who, as King Frederick's secretary, had recently swung over to Eugene's side: Aeneas Sylvius.

Ulrich's success in this phase did not deter George and his party from trying again, this time with a more powerful effort. After preliminary meetings in Pelhřimov a "great diet," representing all countries of the Bohemian crown, was called to Prague in November 1446.<sup>10</sup> This diet had considerable significance for the constitutional development of Bohemia. More clearly than at any previous diet appear the three estates or "curias," lords, knights and cities, as individual entities which would sit and discuss matters separately, trying to reach an understanding within each "curia," before joining with the other two in a common session. While, for the time being, this seemed rather to indicate a strengthening of the two lower groups against the lords, in the long run it was to have the opposite

<sup>9</sup> See Palacký, *Dějiny*, IV, 1, p. 116 n. 126 (German, p. 132 n. 127).

<sup>10</sup> *AČ*, II, 209-217, and *SLČP*, 132-133.

effect: the time would come when lords and knights would combine to deprive the cities of part of their political rights.

The first indication for this trend were already visible in the discussion of what was, at this stage, the most important political issue submitted to the diet: the appointment of a regent or "gubernator." Both the idea and the term were, at this moment, borrowed from Hungary, where five months earlier, in a basically very similar situation, the estates had elected John Hunyadi as regent with essentially royal prerogatives. That there was just as much need for a strong central power in Bohemia could not be denied by anybody at this stage, even though Ulrich of Rosenberg was firmly determined to prevent any such thing from happening. Thus he was pleased when the matter, despite an acceptance of the principle by the two noble estates, got bogged down in questions of procedure. There was agreement that the regent should be elected for a period of two years and should be bound to cooperate closely with a permanent council or committee to be elected by the estates. But when the knights suggested that this council should consist exclusively of members of the nobility, the cities objected to the whole procedure as endangering their traditional freedoms. They feared that the regent might try to subject them to taxation without their assent and urged the diet to devote its attention first and foremost to the issues of the confirmation of the Archbishop and the introduction of the boy-king into the Bohemian crown lands. The conflict between knight and cities, secretly fanned by Rosenberg, finally served him well. He found sufficient support for a move to adjourn this discussion till after the return of the embassies which the diet had decided to send to the courts of Pope Eugene and King Frederick III.

The hope for a regency had, for the time being, to be buried. Yet the decision to send those two embassies, again arrived at without any visible dissent from the Rosenberg party, seemed at least to indicate a strengthening of the Poděbradian position. There was, so it seemed, no question that the demand for Rokycana's confirmation, as well as that for having young Ladislav taken to Bohemia, expressed the will of the whole nation, at least of such a large majority that it could demand to be regarded as near-unanimous. But Rosenberg had carefully laid his counterplans.

One who would play a central role in these plans was already a leading figure in the Curia, Juan Carvajal, Bishop of the Spanish

diocese of Plasencia,<sup>11</sup> whose rapid rise was confirmed by the cardinal's hat which, in 1446, he received from Pope Eugene IV. It was, at the same time, a reward for services rendered to the Roman Pope in his struggle against the Basel party, and a means of strengthening him for the future performance of similar achievement. Carvajal was a man of great perspicacity and ability, a powerful, dynamic personality, deeply convinced of the necessity of Papal absolutism and of a completely unified ritual. The Czech biblicism appeared to him fantastic and dangerous. The claim to retain the communion in the two kinds, based as it was on a literal understanding of the words of Christ, could not be tolerated. The fact that there was a powerful Catholic faction among the high nobility of Bohemia seemed to show the way to liquidate, in good time, the disturbing irregularities. Ulrich of Rosenberg, thus, was his natural ally, and a correspondence between the two men began to design the steps to be taken,<sup>12</sup> with Carvajal assuring Rosenberg that his advice was sure to be followed, though there were people at the Roman court who felt that Rosenberg's constant deceit—openly demanding the confirmation of the Compacts and the Archbishop, while secretly counseling against it—might eventually lead to serious trouble.<sup>13</sup> Yet the success of Rosenberg's plans seemed virtually guaranteed by the fact that, even before the arrival of the official Czech delegation, Carvajal had been chosen to go to Bohemia himself as Papal legate and there to put matters right.

The Czech embassy, which arrived in Rome on May 1st, 1447, had its chances for success sharply curtailed by still another change in the general situation. For by then the uncomfortable "neutrality" of the German princes in the struggle between the two popes had become a thing of the past. On February 7th, only two weeks before his death, the ambassadors of King Frederick as well as some of the foremost princes of the Empire recognized Eugene IV and swore the oath of obedience to him as the true pope. This act, in fact if not yet in form, put an end to the second papal schism of the late

<sup>11</sup> See about his life and work the careful and well documented work by L. Gomez Canedo, *Don Juan de Carvajal, Un español al servicio de la Santa Sede*, Madrid, 1945. The older work by Lopez de Barrera (*De rebus gestis Joannis card. Carvajalis commentarius*, Rome, 1752) has little value.

<sup>12</sup> *Monatsschrift des böhm. vaterländ. Museums*, February 1828, Urkundenbuch, pp. 45-51, and Palacký, *Dějiny*, IV, 1, 140 n. 148 (German, 160, n. 149).

<sup>13</sup> See Prokop of Rabstein's letter to Rosenberg, *AČ*, II, 435.

Middle Ages, and essentially ensured the victory of the papal claims over the hopes of a reform in the direction of conciliar parliamentarism. The new Pope, the clever humanist Thomas of Sarzana, who as Nicholas V mounted the throne on March 6th, therefore no longer needed to make concessions to Bohemia in return for her recognition. Also, like Carvajal, Nicholas was a personal acquaintance of Rosenberg, whose guest he had been in his castle of Krumlov.

It took the Czech delegates some time to realize fully how poor their chances for success had become. They were treated politely by Pope and Cardinals, were questioned in some detail about Rokycana, his ideas, his influence, and what his means of substance would be if he were really Archbishop of Prague. But in the end the ambassadors heard, unofficially, that there was very little chance of Rokycana's confirmation unless he was ready to abandon the Chalice. The official answer of the Pope sounded somewhat different: So far there is no true religious peace in the kingdom of Bohemia. Therefore the Pope will send one of his foremost helpers, Cardinal Carvajal, with full power, first to explore the situation, especially the religious beliefs of the kingdom and those of the elected Archbishop—and then, on the basis of a thorough investigation, he will arrange all things that need arranging, including the task of providing the country with a recognized ecclesiastical head.

This was, as yet, not an unmistakable "No" to the Czech demands. But the Czech ambassadors knew quite well what was meant. Their spokesman, the Utraquist priest Jacob of Jemnice, himself a friend and disciple of Rokycana, answered that the Czechs did not want to widen the breach between themselves and the papal Curia. Yet if confirmation of the Archbishop was not now granted they might be forced to part ways completely with the Roman Church, and they would have to make it known to all the world that this was not their fault. This declaration was not just an empty threat. Even earlier there had been some serious discussion about the possibility of renouncing episcopal ordination and instead giving just priests who had been fully consecrated the right to ordain other priests by laying on hands. As yet, however, the grave step was not taken.<sup>14</sup>

Just as unsuccessful as the embassy to Rome was the one sent to King Frederick. The King, indeed, again largely acting on the advice of Rosenberg, was at first less outspoken in his negative atti-

<sup>14</sup> The whole story of the embassy is contained partly in the reports to the diet (*ibid.*, 233ff.), partly in material contained in the Třeboň archives and quoted in excerpts by Palacký, *Dějiny*, IV, 1, pp. 143-148 (German, 164-169).

tude than the Pope. Yet when a large group of men from the three parties assembled late in September 1447 to go to Vienna in the hope of returning with Ladislav, Frederick informed them at the last moment that, if this was their purpose, they should save themselves the trouble, as the boy-king could not be allowed to go till he was of age.<sup>15</sup>

It seems that this was the moment when George decided that his patience was exhausted. The game of calling diets, accepting unanimous resolutions, sending embassies, and having all this secretly counteracted and sabotaged by Rosenberg was, to his mind, played to exhaustion and could no longer offer any hope to the sorely tried country. The only alternative, obviously, was for his own party to oust its adversaries from their seats of power. The plans for such a new strategy were laid at a meeting of the lords and knights of the Poděbradian League at Kutná Hora in October 1447. While complete secrecy prevailed about the decisions taken there,<sup>16</sup> one outcome, nevertheless, became clear: the Poděbradians undertook very considerable military preparations. But at the same time George was resolved to avoid actions that might alert his main adversary: Rosenberg.

Luck, now as often later, came to his assistance. There seemed to be a good cause for those armaments—outside the general development of Bohemian politics. In the course of the year 1447 Duke William of Saxony had hired a rather large army of Czech mercenaries, originally for an attack on his brother, Elector Frederick, with whom he had fallen out over the heritage from their father. When, however, an armistice was concluded between the brothers before the troops had been employed, William induced them to help him in a war which he, together with the Archbishop-Elector Dietrich of Cologne, waged against several places in Westphalia which had rebelled against Dietrich. After considerable initial success the Czech troops failed to conquer the very strong town and castle of Soest and eventually returned home. Throughout most of the campaign the Czechs had been left without the pay or the provisions promised to them by Duke William. In addition, marching through the territories of the Elector Frederick, they had even been attacked and had lost most of what booty they had made before.<sup>17</sup> The fate of

<sup>15</sup> *AČ*, II, 219f.

<sup>16</sup> *SLČP*, 137.

<sup>17</sup> See about the whole matter especially J. Hansen, *Westphalen und Rheinland im 15. Jahrhundert, I, Die Soester Fehde* (Publicationen aus dem preussischen Staatsarchiv, vol. 34),

this expedition—most of whose leaders belonged to the Poděbradian party—caused fierce resentment in Bohemia, and by the end of 1447 the possibility of an all-out war between the Bohemian estates and the Saxon princes loomed large. Duke William who had a healthy respect for the military strength that even a disunited Bohemia could mobilize, decided to give in. He submitted the issue to the arbitration of two Czech leaders—George himself and his old friend Aleš Holický of Sternberg. William was let off fairly easily—a fact which helped to lay the basis for a rather consequential friendship between him and George—and eventually paid off most of what he owed. No so, however, his brother Frederick against whom now most of the Czech anger was directed.

The considerable tension which thus prevailed in the winter 1447–1448 was a background against which the consistent preparations of the Poděbradians could continue without arousing too much suspicion. King Frederick, it is true, became somewhat alarmed and asked Rosenberg to explore the situation for him. But Rosenberg, so used to deceiving others, was now strangely ready to be deceived. He wrote the King that there was no danger from this side.<sup>18</sup> George had meantime done what he could to make Rosenberg trust in his good intentions toward him, in particular by taking his side in a minor struggle which Rosenberg had with his old neighbor and adversary, the city of Tabor.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, the Poděbradian party found itself ready for action when the time was ripe for it.

The next help, however came, albeit indirectly, from a most unexpected side: from Cardinal Carvajal. The papal legate, on his way from Rome, spent a short time at the castle of Krumlov, residence of his friend Rosenberg, who with his three sons, with Menhart of Hradec and other magnates escorted him to Prague. He arrived in the capital on May 1, and was received with jubilation by huge throngs of people who greeted him as if he were their savior. Somehow—despite the most cautious reports of the embassy—strong expectations had risen that he would finally bring from Rome the two things for which the majority of the population had hoped so long: the confirmation of the Compacts and of Rokycana's Archiepiscopate.

Carvajal, however, entirely misunderstood the significance of the

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Leipzig, 1888, and A. Bachmann, "H. Wilhelm von Sachsen und sein böhmisches Söldnerheer auf dem Zuge vor Soest," *Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte*, II, 1881, 97ff.

<sup>18</sup> *Monatsschrift des vaterländischen Museums*, 52.

<sup>19</sup> About this, see Urbánek, *Věk*, II, 149 n. 3, and 150–156.

great popularity which seemed to envelop him wherever he went. He had, so far in his career, been favored by success to an unusual degree. He felt sure that he knew, here as elsewhere, the issues involved and that he could deal with the difficulties simply by a sufficient display of clarity and energy. The extraordinary warmth of his reception made him rely on such a procedure even more. He saw it as a tribute to his personality and to his high office as representative of the Holy See—not, as he should have done, as an expression of the people's belief that he was the bringer of "heavenly presents."<sup>20</sup>

Carvajal, indeed, showed very soon how unfounded their hope was. On the first Sunday of his stay in Prague he publicly demonstrated his annoyance when he found that in the Church of St. George the Holy Communion was given in both kinds. On the day after, May 6th, he met for the first time the lay-leader of the Czech Utraquists, George Poděbrady, in person. Of their discussion—if there was any—we know nothing.<sup>21</sup> It may have served as preparation for the prelate's meeting with the Estates of the kingdom which had been called as a special diet for the occasion.

At this meeting the representatives of the diet—and again we hear of no dissenting voice from Rosenberg or any other Catholics—demanded the confirmation of the Compacts as they were granted by the Council of Basel, emphasizing that this had occurred while the Council was still fully under the authority of Pope Eugene IV. Regarding the archbishop it was pointed out that his election had been permitted to the Estates by Emperor Sigismund. The confirmation of Rokycana, a man "so capable, so worthy and so much needed by the whole Kingdom," would contribute more effectively and more quickly to the renewal of religious faith and ecclesiastical

<sup>20</sup> Part of the speech with which he was greeted said: *Ingrederere, o pater, civitatem nostram cum domis coelestibus: age pacem populo desiderabilem, age sanctam unitatem, age salutem et concordiam salutarem; ut haec incluta civitas per te, pater, donis repleta coelestibus, decantare possit feliciter illud angelicum canticum vere salutare: et in terra pax et salus bonae voluntatis hominibus.* (See the appendix in Gomez Canedo, *Carvajal*, and Palacký, *Dějiny*, IV, I, 162 n. 171 [German, 185 n. 172]).

<sup>21</sup> The main source of the events during the meeting is a diary kept by one of Carvajal's attendants (Viennese Court Library No. 4764, fol. 169-172). The material was fully published only by L. Gomez Canedo, in an appendix (pp. 303-311) to *Carvajal*. There (pp. 112-121) also is a general discussion of the Cardinal's Prague visit. See also Palacký, *Dějiny*, IV, I, 163-167 (German, 184-191), and Urbánek, *Věk*, II, 235-258. Parts of the same material were used literally, others with modification, by J. Cochlaeus, *Historia Hussitarum*, Mainz, 1549, pp. 349-357. A shorter description reflecting the Czech attitude is given by *SLČP*, pp. 137-139.

order and unity than that of any other man. Finally the estates complained about King Frederick's stubborn refusal to release young Ladislav and ended with the threat, occasionally uttered before, that if Frederick continued in this attitude the Czechs would be forced to elect someone else as their King.

Carvajal answered first that it was of special importance to return the archiepiscopal estates to the hands of the Church, after which the Pope would see to it that Bohemia received again an archbishop in ways fully agreeing with the canonical law. This declaration, of course, constituted a double rebuke to the Czechs. They had offered at least partial restitution of the estates to the Archbishop once he was confirmed. Besides, the method of Rokycana's election had been clearly non-canonical. Carvajal's answer to the issue of Bohemia kingship was that they should have patience and do nothing rash. An attempt to elect anybody but Ladislav would only increase the difficulties of the country. Regarding the Compacts, finally, the Cardinal, somewhat strangely, pleaded ignorance both for himself and for the Pope. He had, so he said, never seen and therefore had never been able to study this document. If given the opportunity he would willingly and carefully examine it and then give the Czechs his own and the Holy See's position to it. Accordingly, on May 9th, George of Poděbrady personally visited the Cardinal, carrying with him the precious document: the original of the Compacts as ratified and signed in Jihlava, on July 5th, 1436, and containing the seals of the representatives of the Council of Basel, of the Czech Estates, and of the Emperor Sigismund. George left the Compacts in Carvajal's hands, together with a new, written declaration about the requests of the Estates. To these voices were added, on behalf of Rokycana's confirmation, those of the three most conservative Masters of the University—men who had gone farthest toward reunion with the Catholic Church: John Příklad, Prokop of Pilsen, and Peter of Mladeňovice. For the next few days the negotiations continued, moving along on almost precisely the same tracks on which they had started. Various groups, such as committees of the diet, the major part of the faculty of the University, and influential individual members of both bodies—including even Rokycana himself—tried to argue with Carvajal and prove to him the justice, fairness, and usefulness of the Czech demands for the sake of peace and religious health of the kingdom, as well as of the Unity of Christendom. In general the Cardinal's tactic was to evade

the material issues, while at the same time trying to win over as many people as possible—individuals and larger groups—for the attitude of unquestioning obedience to the Curia, implying, of course, the renunciation of the Chalice.

With some individuals, indeed, he was successful. To those whom he could convert—that is induce them to ask for absolution for their deviation and to swear in future to forego the communion in both kinds—belonged one of the better known clerics of the conservative Utraquist group, John Papoušek, priest at the same Týn Church which had, till 1436, been Rokycana's parish, and, even more important, Menhart of Hradec, as Lord High Burgrave the ranking official of the kingdom and, at least in name, still the leader of the more conservative wing among the Utraquist barons.

But if Carvajal thought that he might have a corresponding success with the masses of the people, he was mistaken. On May 12th, in the Utraquist Church of St. James in the Old Town, he took publicly, in the presence of the city councillors, the communion in one kind and gave the order that it be given equally to others. The act, far from impressing the people as an example, outraged them. The event happened to be followed by three days of unusually severe late frost which wrought havock in the vineyards and orchards of the Prague district. The people had little doubt that this was an expression of God's anger about the legate's act.

After this, things quickly drove toward a climax. When the Czechs, in renewed negotiations, pressed for the confirmation of the Compacts, Carvajal confounded them by declaring that he did not even have the power to do this, although, as everybody knew, the Pope had announced that he was sending Carvajal "to arrange everything." At this stage, one of the most conservative among the Utraquist masters, Peter of Mladeňovice, arose and declared: "If you do not confirm us the Compacts and Rokycana's position you will hear strange things about this kingdom even before you get back to Rome." It seems quite likely that this remark hinted at plans which developed only a few years later—the idea of joining up with the Church of Constantinople.

It was only now that the diet received the full, official report from the men who had led the embassy to Rome. They had, as they explained, so far withheld it so as not to prejudice all chances for a success of the present negotiations though they had well known how meager these chances were. From now on the Utraquists saw no

more hope, and if some sort of "negotiations" were still continued for a day or two they were actually conducted by Rosenberg and his friends in the hope of covering up the utter fiasco of Carvajal's mission. This attempt, however, was bound to fail, as the general mood among the people of Prague became more and more bitter. Some people are said to have suggested that the Cardinal deserved to be treated the way Hus was treated at Constance. Thus the legate began seriously to fear for his safety and decided to leave the city early on May 23rd, under the protection of the Rosenberg retinue, through crowds of angry and excited onlookers, some of whom threw stones at the cortege.

At this stage John Příbram, who had long been a near-convert to Rome, alerted the diet that the Cardinal had not yet returned the Compacts. A small troupe of horsemen was dispatched to stop the Cardinal and have the precious document returned. Carvajal first tried to get out of this predicament by declaring that the document, which had been entrusted to him by the diet, would only be returned to the diet if and when this body officially requested it. But the Czechs were not fooled that easily, and the Cardinal, pleading that the document was carefully packed in the depth of his coffers, had to promise that he would return it immediately upon reaching his first overnight stay—the town of Benešov. To make sure that he would keep his word the diet sent to Benešov a troop of 400 horse under the command of two noblemen, and here the prelate had to let go of his precious conquest. On the basis of the whole story and of the special importance that the time attributed to the symbolic and legal significance of the physical presence of documents (as e.g. in the case of challenges and safe-conducts) it seems quite impossible to see in Carvajal's behavior anything but a premeditated attempt to deprive the Czechs of the ground they felt they could stand on in their dealings with Rome.<sup>22</sup>

Carvajal's mission was a major turning point in the development of this phase of Bohemian history. Its utter failure illuminated more sharply than any event since 1436 the precarious and artificial structure of the peace, or rather armistice, between Czech Hussitism and

<sup>22</sup> See Bachmann's attempt (*Geschichte Böhmens*, II, Gotha, 1905, 413) to excuse Carvajal: "Dass Carvajal inmitten der tumultuarischen Abreise vergessen hatte, das . . . Original der Kompaktaten zurückzustellen, trug ihm noch den schimpflichen Verdacht ein, er habe die wertvolle Urkunde entführen wollen." Against this, see Urbánek, *Věk*, II, 256f. especially n. 3.

the Roman Church. Until now the Church had managed to evade a clear answer to the question of whether or not this armistice was to be maintained. It had been maintained by leaving things alone—to an extent. But the steady pressure that was exerted against them forced the Hussites to press, themselves, for a more explicit recognition and especially for a working arrangement to ordain Utraquist priests. The refusal to do anything of that sort showed that the armistice might be shattered at any time. The situation demanded a stronger effort toward national strength and unity, for an end to the Rosenberg sabotage which divided the nation. Thus the clash of wills of May 1448 seemed to give a clearer mandate to George of Poděbrady. But this clash also illuminated to him the strategy, political and military, to be pursued, and thereby strengthened his chances to pursue it.

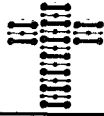
The paramount object for the policy of national unification now became the city of Prague. Her role in Czech history is as central as is that of Paris in the history of France. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that whoever, for any sustained period, was lord of Prague was also lord of the kingdom. This was so for reasons of geography, of politics, economics, and communications. It was so, too, for reasons of psychology, for the capital was not only the residence of the King and the seat of the government (as long as there was a King and a national government), it was also the seat of the Archbishop (if there was one) and of the University which, for all the loss it had suffered in international standing during the wars, still held enormous prestige nationally, and even beyond. Finally the city was, by the number of its people which far surpassed that of any other town in the kingdom, the greatest potential recruiting reservoir in the nation and thus of great military significance. As a fortress it was considered impregnable.

Ever since the last Luxemburg King had entered Prague in 1436 the forces of Catholic reaction, the forces of the Rosenberg party, had been at work to strengthen their hold on the capital. They had made considerable progress in this endeavor, and no one had been as useful to them for this purpose as the Lord High-Burgrave, Menhart of Hradec. But all he could do was to make sure that reliable people were in the most important official positions, especially those of the mayors of the three boroughs, of whom only the Old Town and the New Town really counted, as the third one, the Small Side, was still suffering from the destructions inflicted on it during the

## THE FIRST GREAT DUEL

Hussite Wars. There was, in addition, the Catholic chapter of the Cathedral of St. Vitus, the paramount ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Church within Bohemia proper. On the other side stood the majority of the people, most especially the lower middle class, that is craftsmen and guildsmen of the New Town. They were determined Utraquists. Thus the city was divided against itself—Catholics and near-Catholics in the seats of power, Hussites dominant among the masses.

For a long time the Utraquist majority had seen little hope of getting rid of their masters, and as long as this mastery was wielded with a combination of strength and caution things seemed bearable. The events during Carvajal's visit, however, had sapped their strength and made caution appear as lack of determination. Thus the internal development in Prague greatly favored the plans which the Poděbradian party began to work out in these days.



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## CHAPTER 3

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### THE CONQUEST OF THE REGENCY

THE HUSSITE WARS were among the fiercest and most sustained combats of the late Middle Ages, and brought about enormous changes in warfare. Thus they are of particular interest to the student of military history. In the Poděbradian era this interest is bound to weaken. Not till the open struggle fought in the final years of George's reign against Matthias Corvinus and the League of Zelená Hora does the military development as such again become interesting and significant, and even then it is, as we shall see, only a shadow of the earlier war of survival fought by the Czechs.

In his conquest of Prague George of Poděbrady showed himself a capable leader of an armed expedition, especially in its preparation. Yet the main force which he brought to bear was political and religious propaganda. By its help he eventually succeeded in mobilizing a "fifth column" of devoted adherents, overwhelmingly Utraquist, in the city, and at the same time he frightened the Catholic party into something like inertia, which largely counteracted all attempts at an effective resistance. As a result the attackers, in the night from September 2 to 3, 1448, gained access to the city, mainly through the gates of the Vyšehrad, with hardly any losses, and had the city firmly in their hands before the mass of the defenders had become fully aware of it. The Poděbradians found themselves greeted and fêted by the great majority of the people, while the leaders of the Conservative party were lucky to escape successfully, among them the city's captain general Hanuš of Kolovrat and the burgomasters of the Old and the New Town. The leading clergy of the Prague archiepiscopal chapter also made good their escape—though for them it was hardly a question of survival, rather one of extreme caution. Most of them, including the renegade, John Papoušek, for the time being established their residence elsewhere, preferably at Pilsen, now as before Bohemia's chief bulwark of Catholic resistance to the Reformation. The conquest of Prague, according to our main source,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *SLČP*, 137ff.; *SLČV*, 111ff. The most detailed modern treatments in Tomek, *Dějepis*, VI, 2nd ed. 147ff., and above all Urbánek, *Věk*, II, 276ff.

also resulted in a considerable exodus of Germans, among them a good many students at the University. For the common people the whole event was one of enjoyment, but one of its nastier expressions was an attack upon the Jewish ghetto, which was thoroughly ransacked.

Among the people who failed to escape only one was of national importance: Menhart of Hradec, lord high-burgrave of Prague, thereby highest official of the kingdom, and leader, in name at least, of what had been the party of the conservative Calixtines. George ordered him to be taken to his castle of Poděbrady and there kept as a prisoner. Menhart, so George declared, would have to answer accusations before a national diet to be called in the near future. It seems possible that George eventually regretted this step, for it created a lot of trouble for him. The prisoner's son, Ulrich of Hradec, immediately interceded for his father in a correspondence which has been preserved and which is rather characteristic for the time.<sup>2</sup> At first he seemed mainly worried whether his father was treated properly, whether, for instance, a jester had been put at his disposal. But as George, with all due respect for father and son, firmly refused to release the father before the diet had met, the son became insistent and angry, claiming the continued confinement to be an insult to the honor of the family. After some time, in January 1449, the old gentleman himself, irate and bitter about his imprisonment, fell ill. At this stage George decided to free him, as he feared the propagandist effects if Menhart were to die as a prisoner in Poděbrady. Menhart was released and taken to Říčany, but the travel was too much for him, and he died a few days later. At the time it was no surprise that murder by poisoning was suspected. In the eyes of Ulrich of Hradec this became very soon an indubitable fact which strengthened his determination to punish and destroy the killer of his father. The group around him—cautiously directed by the Lord of Rosenberg, who was now on his way back from the court of King Frederick—met at the town of Strakonice and there organized itself as a league of Catholic Lords. It included six barons (but by no means all the members of their families among whom at least the Lords of Wartenberg, Riesenberg, Šumburg, and Kolovrat were split) as well as the cities of Pilsen and Budweis.<sup>3</sup> Some sort of negotiations still took place—each side challenging the other to participate in a diet which

<sup>2</sup> In the collection of letters of the family of Hradec, *AČ*, IV, 3–33.

<sup>3</sup> *AČ*, II, 244ff.; *SLČK*, 209ff.

should decide about the merits of the struggle—but there was now little chance for a peaceful agreement without a trial of strength.

George, by this time, had, for all practical purposes, become the ruler of most of Bohemia, and occasionally used the expression “administrator” or “governor” in some of his pronouncements.<sup>4</sup> If his enemies wanted to prevent him from further reinforcing his position they had to organize and use all their strength, and the renewal of a bitter civil war seemed unavoidable. The lords of the League of Strakonice would have liked, for the sake of national and international support, to present the struggle as a fight against heresy. George, as often in similar situations later on, worked hard to prevent any such interpretation from gaining credence and support. The Catholic element, though a minority, was, especially among the high nobility, too strong to be thus allowed to slip altogether into the camp of his adversaries. To avoid this he had to put some of his Catholic friends into a position of representative influence which could not be overlooked by anybody inside or outside Bohemia. Acting completely as if the regency were his on a firmly legal basis, he appointed Lord Zdeněk of Sternberg as lord high-burgrave to succeed Menhart of Hradec.<sup>5</sup>

The appointment—George’s strength appears in the fact that no one questioned its validity—was a step of great significance. Probably Zdeněk was, at this time, already the most prominent, and certainly the most active, member of the great Sternberg clan with whom George himself had become so closely allied by his marriage with Kunhuta of Sternberg. As far as the religious issue was concerned, this noble family, as so many others, had long been split. Among the older members, the dowager Perchta had given strong support to the Hussites as early as 1421, while the oldest among the men still alive, Aleš Holický, originally a follower of the Emperor Sigismund, had after a period of hesitation gone over to the revolution in 1424. Zdeněk himself was and remained a Catholic. He was a proud and intelligent man, calculating and selfish, and therefore generally eager to keep on good terms with those whom he expected to prevail in

<sup>4</sup> The term “správce” is somewhat less precise than the two terms used later in non-Czech documents: “gubernator” or, in German, “Landesverweser.”

<sup>5</sup> The only monograph on this important figure is by Věra Kosinová, “Zdeněk ze Šternberka a jeho královské ambice” in *K dějinám čsl. v období humanismu, Sborník prací věnovaných J. B. Novákovi*, Prague, 1932, pp. 206–218. The author assumes that Zdeněk’s military experiences and gifts especially recommended him to George. I doubt that this was really decisive. See also below, chapter XVII, n. 8.

the domestic struggles. At this time he rightly expected that this would be the husband of his cousin, George of Poděbrady. Thus he had strongly supported George's policy, and had done nothing to warn his old friend, Ulrich of Rosenberg, in whose house he had spent some of his younger years. Instead he had taken an active part in the conquest of Prague at George's side. As the most prominent Catholic in the Poděbradian camp he did, thus, establish a strong claim to recognition of his merits at the hand of the future regent. It is difficult to decide whether George was under any effective pressure in appointing Zdeněk to this high office. One might wonder why he would not have aspired to it himself. Yet it seems clear that he had more in mind: the officially recognized regency. For it, he needed wide support among the barons, one which would not be limited to the determined Utraquists. (As for the rest of the people represented in the great diets, knights and cities, especially Prague, he had less cause for worry.) This baronial support might depend on the chance of effectively splitting the Catholic part of the high nobility, and this could hardly be achieved without the cooperation of a leading Catholic lord.

The appointment, therefore, was almost certainly the price which George paid, in advance, for the new High Burgrave's help in the future election of a regent. Zdeněk of Sternberg was to play an enormous role in the life of George of Poděbrady and in the history of his rule over Bohemia. It was, for a time, mostly a helpful one, but would become eventually a role of extreme harmfulness to George. Yet no one could have foreseen this at the time of his appointment, when it was merely an appropriate political decision whose advantages seemed greater than the risk involved.

Zdeněk of Sternberg was not the only Catholic to occupy an important position in the new regime headed by George. Even so, the men of the League of Strakonice were far from ready to give in. An armistice concluded between the two groups in April 1449<sup>6</sup> with the goal of opening the way toward a new, all-national diet was breached by the league long before, after one year's duration, it was supposed to end. Soon both sides tried to prepare for the decisive struggle by getting additional support from beyond the Czech borders. Ulrich of Rosenberg's old and friendly connection with Frederick III availed him little at this time. The King, always a cau-

<sup>6</sup> *AČ*, II, 250ff. For the resumption of hostilities see George's letter in *ibid.*, V, 268. Also in B. Václavek, *Český listář*, pp. 65-66.

tious man, saw very clearly that Ulrich's chances had suffered greatly by the recent development and could not be expected to recover easily. Thus he wisely held back. But both sides sought and found support in the north where the two Saxon dukes, enemies though brothers, had long been involved in the Czech struggles. Indeed George of Poděbrady, whose military preparations against Prague had been hidden behind the cloak of measures directed against Saxony, had actually followed up the conquest of the capital by a short campaign into Saxony. Now the war was resumed, with Duke Frederick supporting the League of Strakonice, William the Poděbradians.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the participation of the Saxon dukes had only a very minor influence on the outcome of the Czech civil war. Duke Frederick's forces, in particular, partly immobilized by the enmity of his brother William and the Margraves of Brandenburg, came too late to take part in the only important battle, in which, on June 4th, 1450, the Poděbradians, under George's command, suppressed the forces of the League near the little town of Rokycany in western Bohemia.<sup>8</sup> This battle, fought with the arms developed during the Hussite Revolution, had nevertheless little in common with the great and bitter encounters of that tremendous struggle. But then, also, there were none of the sharp national, social, and especially religious issues at stake that had aroused the passions on both sides of that great war. Indeed the Bohemian Civil War of 1450, essentially conducted by two factions of the country's aristocracy and largely limited to their immediate forces and followers, was not unlike the struggle that was to break out, merely five years later, in England, only without its dynastic background and on a much smaller scale.

Though the members of the league had sworn to continue the struggle as a holy fight for the salvation of their faith, now, after the Battle of Rokycany, they felt that their honor, at least, had been saved. As early as June 11th an armistice was concluded at the castle of Wildstein (near Pilsen) in which the members of the League of Strakonice obliged themselves to abide by and support the Compacts and the Letter of Pacification of 1440.<sup>9</sup> The league also agreed to renounce all further cooperation with Frederick of Saxony. On November 25th a national diet was to be held at which all important leaders of the parties involved in the war would appear. Ulrich of

<sup>7</sup> Issues and events of the Saxon War are best summarized by Urbánek, *Věk*, II, 382ff.

<sup>8</sup> *SLČP*, 143.

<sup>9</sup> *AČ*, II, 274ff. See its evaluation by Urbánek, *Věk*, II, 454ff.

Rosenberg's oldest son, Henry, guaranteed that, if his father should remain absent, he, Henry, would represent the house and party of Rosenberg. Meantime all pending issues were to be submitted to a committee of arbitrators, two from each side. They were Henry of Rosenberg and William of Riesenberk, both members of great noble families, for the league, and for the Poděbradian party Lord Zdeněk of Sternberk and a man of somewhat lower status, Zdeněk Kostka of Postupice, of a family of knights and son of one of the strongest, most competent leaders of the Utraquist gentry during the Hussite Wars: William Kostka. Like William, his son Zdeněk was to show the qualities of a real statesman, and George trusted him fully. He was the only Hussite among the four arbitrators. They elected as a "neutral" chairman for their group another great Catholic baron: Zbyněk Zajíc of Hasenberk.

Domestic peace thus was restored to most of the kingdom. George of Poděbrady now decided to even accounts with Frederick of Saxony. The military expedition which in September 1450 invaded Frederick's territories answered a feeling of general patriotic enthusiasm with which even fervent Catholics were infected. George, in this campaign, earned more military laurels than the civil war in Bohemia had offered him. His greatest single success was the conquest against considerable opposition of the strong town of Gera. The Czechs returned home with what is called "enormous booty," while one of their allies, Margrave Albert of Brandenburg, undertook the job of mediating between the two warring parties.<sup>10</sup>

On his return George did not yet release his army. As long as he had it ready he was able, without any acts which might be interpreted as unfriendly or threatening gestures, to keep the Strakonice party under a certain degree of pressure. Without this pressure the great diet which did, as arranged, meet in Prague on November 25th, might not have been as productive as it turned out to be. That things were not easy could be seen from the very length of the meeting, which did not adjourn till early in January 1451.<sup>11</sup> But decisive for this success was George's statesmanlike moderation in victory. The members of the League of Strakonice were not asked to acknowledge defeat beyond showing their readiness to accept a lasting peace, and on conditions which were far from onerous. The

<sup>10</sup> On the conquest of Gera see the contemporary report of Peter of Sternberk in *AC*, II, 45, and *SLČV*, 113f.

<sup>11</sup> For the resolution of the diet see *AC*, II, 287ff.

strongest symbol of this restoration of peace was the mutual forgiveness and friendship expressed between George and Ulrich of Hradec—based on an arrangement already concluded in the late summer by the arbitrators appointed at Wildstein. Beyond this, all conquests of land and property were to be returned by both sides. All agreed to work, without any subterfuge, for the release of young Ladislav so he could be brought to Bohemia for his coronation, thereby putting a definite end to the troubles of the interregnum. This goal was to be achieved by another mission to be sent to King Frederick III, this time much stronger and more representative than any previous embassy. It would contain seven or eight members from each of the two main parties, plus two neutrals. Again it is characteristic of George's policy that, in contrast to the Strakonice party who, with five lords, nominated only one member of the gentry, no less than five knights or squires were appointed by George, together with only three lords, among them Zdeněk of Sternberg.<sup>12</sup>

The negotiations which were conducted with the King of the Romans in Wiener-Neustadt, his usual residence, seemed to follow the pattern that had been experienced so frequently before. The Czech negotiators asked for Ladislav to be released, otherwise the Czech estates might decide to elect another King. And the answer, too, was eventually to sound much like a repetition to Frederick's previous reactions to the demand of releasing, with Ladislav's person, also his profitable hold upon the administration of part of his heritage, especially the two duchies of Austria. But this time Frederick expected, with some justification, that his answer would not necessarily meet any serious opposition in Bohemia. He had, as before, achieved a secret understanding with those in Bohemia who, as he judged, held the substance of power.<sup>13</sup> Only this time it was no longer Ulrich of Rosenberg, never more than the leader of a powerful minority, but George and the Poděbradian League who could be judged to hold this strong position. It was obvious, at the moment, that George would, sooner or later, gain not only the substance of regency but also the formal position that went with it. King Frederick could base this expectation rather easily on what he had seen happening in Hungary. There John Hunyadi, like George the gifted leader of a movement for national unification, had been elected as regent (gubernator) already in 1446, originally very much

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>13</sup> See Palacký, *Dějiny*, 2nd ed., IV, 1, 232 (German, 265).

against Frederick's wishes. But recently, in October 1450, a full understanding had been reached between the King and the regent of Hungary. In the document containing this understanding<sup>14</sup> it was expressly stated that Ladislav was to remain under King Frederick's tutelage till he reached his majority, i.e. became 18 years old. This would give Hunyadi another seven and a half years to consolidate his strength and with it the general situation in the kingdom against all attempt of his fairly numerous enemies to replace him.

The arrangement with Hunyadi created an easy precedent in the eyes of Frederick and George alike. Presumably Frederick found it even easier to come to an understanding with George of Poděbrady than with John Hunyadi. He had always wanted to be King of Hungary, and his attempts to win the crown of St. Stephen were to play a big and at times highly disturbing role in his reign. But the crown of St. Wenceslas never attracted him very seriously, perhaps because he expected it, for religious reasons, to be too troublesome and difficult a position. Thus he came to understand, respect, and support (within measure) the Bohemia nobleman as soon as it became clear that he, and not the head of the Rosenberg clan, was the strongest person in the country. In this situation their interests were clearly similar, and for exactly the same reasons as had been the case in Hungary: to keep the young heir from entering into his royal heritage as long as this could be done without too much difficulty or without infringing too conspicuously upon Ladislav's rights.

Frederick's answer was presented to the Czech Estates at a diet which had originally been called to Prague but which, because of an epidemic of bubonic plague in the capital, was moved to the small town of Benešov. There, on July 18, King Frederick's envoys arrived, at their head the Bishop of Siena, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini. The bishop, who, in his earlier years, had served the Council of Basel, had for eight years been one of King Frederick's most skillful clerical servants and advisers. At the moment of the meeting nobody could have foreseen that Aeneas' presence there would become a factor of historical significance—perhaps with the exception of the bishop himself who certainly hoped, if he did not expect with some certainty, that he would rise much higher—indeed to the highest place—in the Roman hierarchy. As the policy of the later Pope Pius II would have decisive influence upon the development of the relation between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Bohemia, and indeed on Bohemian

<sup>14</sup> F. Kurz, *Oesterreich unter Kaiser Friedrich IV*, I, Vienna, 1812, appendix No. VII, 258ff.

and Central European history generally, this mission of his was bound to be of great importance.<sup>15</sup> Aeneas' impressions and judgments were shaped by various factors: first by a meeting, in a city of southern Bohemia, with the former Hussite cleric, now a violent renegade to orthodox Catholicism, John Papoušek, who provided him with material, much of it distorting the truth, about Hussite and especially Taborite religious views; secondly by two short but impressive visits to Tabor itself, during which he had long but rather fruitless discussions with the heads of the religious community of Tabor, and which fortified all the prejudices that he had developed earlier; further by his presence at the diet of Benešov, where he saw members of both religions, Catholic and Hussite-Utraquist, in rather close cooperation; and finally (and most importantly) by a lengthy conference which he had with the leading Utraquist layman: George of Poděbrady. They were introduced to each other by Prokop of Rabstein, himself a friend of both men and present at Benešov not as a member of the diet but, like Aeneas, as the King's ambassador. It was he who acted as interpreter.

The later Cardinal and Pope has left a detailed report on this interview with George, contained in a long letter to Carvajal and styled as if he is giving a literal quotation of his own and George's utterances.<sup>16</sup> While Aeneas tried hard and skillfully to put himself and his behavior as both a statesman and churchman in the best possible light, George, too, appears here as a man of strength and cleverness, even wisdom, whose personal role within the general structure of Bohemia—with her painful divisions and struggles and the heretical infections of her religious mind—he viewed as, at least potentially, highly promising. Not that he tried to hide the differences. He registers George's complaints about Carvajal's negative attitude during his mission to Prague, and his emphatic demand for the recognition of the Compacts. "This is," George says, "the shortest, nay the only way to peace and unity." And he keeps returning to this, as something that cannot be compromised. He is less adamant in relation to the other of the perennial demands made by the Czech estates to Rome:

<sup>15</sup> On the whole complex history of the meeting see Urbánek, *Věk*, II, 505–533, and the short but highly suggestive and valuable analysis by H. Kaminsky, "Pius Aeneas Among the Taborites," *Church History*, XXVIII, 1959, 287–295. See also A. Císařová-Kolářová, "Návštěva Eneý Silvia v Táboře," *JČSH*, No. 20, 1951, 61ff.

<sup>16</sup> Most recent publication in Wolkan, *Der Briefwechsel des Aeneas Sylvius*, FRA, 2. Abt. vol. 68, 1918, 22ff. Palacký translated the dialogue into Czech and German in his *Dějiny* (IV, 1, 235–245 and 269–280). See also Urbánek's discussion of it in *Věk*, II, 513–527.

confirmation of Rokycana as Archbishop of Prague, supposedly going so far as indicating that under certain circumstances (one of which would be Rokycana's voluntary resignation which could not very easily be expected) the Czech Estates might consider an alternative solution. The interview ended, somewhat ironically, with Aeneas recommending, as the person who might solve all the problems of Bohemia, the learned Minorite John of Capistrano, and George voicing the hope that this, indeed, might come to pass. (Not too much later it became very clear, even to Aeneas Sylvius, that no one was more apt to exacerbate the struggle between Rome and the Hussites than the future Saint of Capistrano.)

The letter to Carvajal was not merely an intelligence, informing Carvajal about Aeneas's impressions. It contained the seed of a policy which Aeneas, implicitly, suggested to the Curia, in which he hoped to play some role himself, and which for a time he tried to adopt when he had the power to make the decision. And the basis of this policy was a curious mixture of entirely correct and entirely mistaken judgments. Surely he was right when he considered George a man of great ambition to whom political power meant much. But he was wrong if he went so far as to believe that his religious tradition, the Hussite heritage, meant rather little to him and that he would not seriously fight for it. (It was a wrong judgment which he should not have maintained if he took his own information—George's answer to Ladislav's court jester—seriously.) Surely Aeneas was right when he saw that no other man was, at this time, able to win and maintain a strong and faithful following among the Hussite majority of the nation, especially the gentry, and the people of Prague, later also of most other cities. But he was wrong, dangerously so, if he believed that George could lead those people wherever he wanted to have them, even to the abandonment of the Chalice. Aeneas was, from his point of view, quite right—more so than some modern historians of Hussitism—when he considered Rokycana as a man too far gone on the way toward heresy (we might say toward Protestantism) to be trusted by the Roman Curia with the recognized role of archbishop for the Bohemian realm. But he was wrong, again, when he saw this merely as a question of church policy, one which could be solved rather easily by supplanting the man once elected by the Estates, and confirmed by the Emperor Sigismund, with another man of a different religious complexion. Here we may even have some doubt whether George had given him quite

as much reason to believe that the Czechs would consider dropping their demand for Rokycana's confirmation as his letter to Carvajal indicates. The strong popular groundswell in favor of the religious attitudes, and the person, of Rokycana was to become more obvious at a later time.

For the moment, however, and for a long time to come, the Czech leader had reason to be satisfied with the impression he had made upon the Italian prelate, just as the latter felt he had made a lasting impression upon George which could be used to good advantage in the future. Aeneas's report to Carvajal was, of course, paralleled by a report to Frederick III.<sup>17</sup> He could inform the King that his refusal to release Ladislav before the boy's having come of age, reiterated in an elaborate address which he, Aeneas, had presented to the Czech diet,<sup>18</sup> had met with little serious protest, owing essentially to the help given by George. Probably he had emphasized his impression that George was a man of growing strength, and not a fanatic but one with whom it would be possible to negotiate. Thus the King was now more ready than before to grant George's factual leadership of the Czech nation his recognition.

At this time, in the fall of 1451, King Frederick III was preparing an expedition to Italy where he expected to meet his fiancée, princess Leonora of Portugal, and where he was to be crowned as Roman Emperor by Pope Nicholas V. He was willing to pronounce his recognition of George as regent ("gubernator"), but some conflicts within the Poděbradian camp and the still active exertions of the Rosenbergs provided him with the opportunity to limit this recognition to the extent that George was to hold his office only "during the King's pleasure." This, of course, would make him, for the time being, rather dependent on the Habsburg ruler's whim. But the recognition by Frederick was anyhow only another step in the direction of a firm, regularized and effective control of the whole Czech realm.<sup>19</sup> The essential act would be to up the Estates of the kingdom. The question was, how and when it would be possible to create a sufficiently favorable political situation for such a nationwide recognition.

The final step, in this case, seemed in some ways the most difficult.

<sup>17</sup> Its text is not preserved, but its content emerges clearly from the consequences.

<sup>18</sup> See his *Historia Bohemica*, chapter 60, and J. T. Müller, *Reichstag-Theatrum*, Jena, 1713, I, 517f.

<sup>19</sup> See Urbánek, *Věk*, II, 535.