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## HUSSITE PRAGUE IN THE POLITICAL LITERATURE AND PROPAGANDA OF THE PERIOD

The topic of this study is the image of Hussite Prague depicted in general cross sections. A clear-cut current was the idealization of the past in contrast with Hussite period. In this context, particularly praiseworthy was the glorious past of Prague University. As the centre of the Hussite movement, Prague was, obviously, perceived negatively by the official Church although on the other side of the barricade, the Hussites themselves lacked an uniform attitude, and the Taborites and Calixtines differed as regards their evaluation of the capital. Finally, we shall devote a considerable attention to an analysis of the town's aspirations during the revolution, when Prague claimed to be the spiritual, religious and political leading force in the country.

The exceptional and special rank by Prague in the late medieval Bohemian state was the outcome of several factors<sup>1</sup>. At the turn of the

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<sup>1</sup> Syntheses of the history of Prague: V. V. Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy*, vol. I–XII, Praha 1855–1901; *Dějiny Prahy*, ed. J. Janáček, Praha 1964; on the role of Prague in the Late Middle Ages see: R. Nový, *Hospodářský region Prahy na přelomu 14. a 15. století*, «Československý Časopis Historický», vol. 19, 1971, p. 397–418; H. Patze, *Die Bildung der landesherrlichen Residenzer im Reich während des 14. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Stadt und Stadtherren im 14. Jahrhundert. Entwicklung und Funktion*, ed. W. Rausch, Linz 1972, p. 27 sqq; F. Graus, *Prag als Mitte Böhmens 1346–1421*, in: *Zentralität als Problem der mittelalterlichen Stadtgeschichtsforschung*, ed. E. Meynen, Köln–Wien 1979, p. 22–47; P. Moraw, *Zur Mittelpunktfunktion Prags im Zeitalter Karls IV*, in *Europa Slavica — Europa Orientalis, Festschrift für Herbert Ludat*, ed. K. D. Grothusen, K. Zernack, Berlin, p. 445–489; F. Machilek, *Praga caput regni. Zur Entwicklung und Bedeutung Prags im Mittelalter*, in: *Stadt und Landschaft im deutschen Osten und in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. F. B. Kaiser, B. Stasiewski, *Studien zum Deutschtum im Osten*, vol. 17, Köln–Wien 1982, p. 67–125; F. Kavka, *K otázce sjednocení pražských měst v letech 1368–1377 a k místu Prahy v Karlově státní koncepci*, «Documenta Pragensia», vol. IV, 1984, pp. 100–120; J. Spěvák, *Úloha Prahy v koncepci českého státu Karla IV*, «Folia Historica Bohemica», vol. X, 1986, p. 137–171; J. Mežník, *Praha před husitskou revolucí*, Praha 1990 (work written at the end of the 1960s).

fourteenth century Prague was one of the largest towns in Central–Eastern Europe, and one of the important towns on the Continent. The number of its population is estimated at 30–50,000. It was the seat of the secular and spiritual authorities, a religious cult centre and the hometown of the oldest university in Central Europe.

From the point of view of the town's prestige, the peak period was the reign of Charles IV. Prague Castle was then the residence of Bohemian and Roman kings or emperors. It was possible to appreciate (or exaggerate) the significance of the town from a certain distance. In 1359 Heinrich von Diessenhofen noted that Prague, the *metropolis regni Bohemiae* and *sedes imperii* referred to the traditions of Rome and Constantinople<sup>2</sup>.

The reign of Charles IV of Luxemburg, regarded in later writings as the "golden age" in the history of Bohemia, was frequently cited as a *sui generis* antithesis of the Hussite era. This favourite operation was, of course, performed, by the opponents of very far-reaching reforms. Such opinions appeared from the very outset of the revolution. Soon after the Defenestration of 1419, Master Simon of Tišnov in his sermon *Rogate, que ad pacem sunt Jerusalem* challenged Sigismund of Luxemburg to come to the aid of Prague. Without the help of the King of Rome, peace will end, and his refusal will signify the termination of a peace which contributed to the emergence of "the most charming Prague" among other famous towns<sup>3</sup>. Bemoaning the fate which will await the clergy in Prague, Master Simon, longing for the past, says that "Prague is quite different now"<sup>4</sup>. The motif of contrast between the past and contemporaneity returns in a Bohemian dirge *Zname-najte, všichni věrní Čechové*<sup>5</sup>. The blemishes and failures which the Hussites have brought upon Prague were emphasized in a particularly vivid way by the author of *Litera de civitate Pragensi*<sup>6</sup> who stresses the former attractions of the town. The anonymous author was undoubtedly a professor of Prague University, and disapproved of the current changes; writing in 1421, at a time when Prague had reached the peak of success, he paints before the readers' eyes nostalgic pictures of the town in the not too distant past. During

<sup>2</sup> *Fontes Rerum Germanicarum*, vol. IV, ed. J. F. Boehmer, Stuttgart 1968, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Fragment of this sermon in: I. Odložilík, *Z počátků husitství na Moravě. Šimon z Tišnova a Jan Vavřincův z Račic*, «Časopis Matice Moravské», vol. II, 1925, p. 127 sqq.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Dějiny české literatury*, ed. J. Hrabák, vol. I, Praha 1959, p. 200.

<sup>6</sup> This work is published in: *Geschichtschreiber der husitischen Bewegung in Böhmen*, ed. K. Höfler, vol. II, Wien 1865, p. 311–319. The authorship was ascribed to Master Andrew of Brod, Stefan Paleč or Šimon of Tišnov, but none of these assumptions are certain. Cf. F. M. Bartoš, *Planctus super civitatem Pragensem a jeho autor*, «Časopis Českého Musea», vol. CII, 1928, p. 67 sqq; J. PeKař, *Žižka a jeho doba*, vol. I, Praha 1927, p. 117 sqq, 249; *ibidem* vol. IV, Praha 1933, p. 199.

the reign of Charles IV, he claimed, Prague, known as the “mother of towns” radiated with love, delight and prosperity and housed a surplus of food<sup>7</sup>. How did the capital repay Wenceslas IV, the son of Charles, for his care and concern? It refused him a royal funeral, and deprived the second son, Sigismund of Luxemburg, of his rightful inheritance<sup>8</sup>. The allusion to the denial of a royal burial concerned the disturbances which broke out in Prague after the death of Wenceslas IV, making it impossible to conduct a solemn ceremony. Famous and magnificent Prague, the author continues, was admired by neighbouring lands and lacked nothing. Now, power has been taken over by the simple folk, in itself an unprecedented event<sup>9</sup>. Alongside literary and political motifs, the work also introduces economic arguments. The town once profited from the presence of the university. Students and professors rented rooms and entire houses in return for considerable sums. In peacetime, trade flourished, Prague merchants equalled princes, and the stall keepers were famous throughout the land. Prague was the destination of commodities from such countries as Poland and Hungary but also France, England and Venice<sup>10</sup>.

During the reign of Wenceslas IV the rank of Prague as the main political and cultural centre undoubtedly fell in comparison with the era of Charles IV. Nonetheless, the death of Wenceslas on the very threshold of the Hussite revolution came as a shock for his contemporaries. An anonymous Latin poem which probably describes precisely this incident, says that the death of the ruler is a great misfortune for Prague since it opens up the way for the spread of heresy. Just like Mahammed deceived the pagans and the Talmud the Jews, so Wycliffe and Hus deceived the Czeches<sup>11</sup>. Throughout the entire fifteenth century the contrast between the past and Hussite depravity was treated as an effective measuring stick. It was supposed to justify the increasingly universally accepted view that Bohemia is a heretical country. Johannes Hoffmann of Świdnica, who was for a certain period of time connected with the Czech capital, is the author of an apostrophe written in 1430: “O Prague, once you were the town of faith, and wisdom, and now you are the seat of perfidy and the teacher of errors...”<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Geschichtschreiber*, vol. II, p. 311: *in pragensi civitate, quae propter sapientiam et prudentiam quasi mater aliarum fueras civitatum, Civitas pietatis et clementiae, Civitas consolationis et laetitiae, Civitas absque penuria, Civitas in qua habudantis victualium copiosa.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 312.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 313: *Non erat sic pristinis temporibus ut te videlicet urbem nobilem communis populus gubernasset.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 315: *Quis cogitavit haec super Pragam quondam inclitam et coronatam, cuius negotiatores principes, institores eius incliti terrae. O Praga, tibi Francia, tibi Anglia, tibi Hungaria, tibi Polonia, tibi Veneciae, tibi quevis adiacens provincia sua mercimonia porrigebat.*

<sup>11</sup> *Geschichtschreiber*, op. cit., vol. I, p. 563.

In 1433 Henryk Toke, a canon from Magdeburg and an envoy from the council of Basle, visited Prague and, referring to the past, expressed a similar reflection: *Antique tue dignitatis memores, stupefacti pia mente compatimur et floridum illum statum ac pristinam gloriam restauranti toto mentis desiderio peroptantes, cooperabimur pro posse, ut primevo flore iuvenescas, et fructus parturias prioribus uberiores. Compatimur quidem, videntes quid nunc es... multis prior in donis, et maior in imperio, fide, devocione, pace, concordia, rerum opulencia, seculari ac divina sapiencia, et politica gloria flouristi! Tu nedum regale, sed Christianitatis occidentalis ecclesie imperiale solium possedisti... Quid autem nunc sis, tu scis, et intra te ipsam iudicabis*<sup>13</sup>.

Equally affecting are the words of the famous Austrian theologian, Tomas Ebendorfer, who in the middle of the century (after the seizure of Prague by George of Poděbrady in 1448) grieved over the new fall of the Bohemian capital, the last stage of losses produced by the Hussite turmoil. What has happened, he asks, to the radiance of this town, where is the archbishop, the royal throne, the world famous magnificence of St. Vitus cathedral, and other churches, where is the faith which was once elevated higher than in all the other towns in the world?<sup>14</sup>

The attitudes towards Prague during the Hussite revolution were also expressed by its opponents in the later period, especially the reign of the Hussite, George of Poděbrady. During the campaign conducted in 1471 and concerning the election of the royal heir, the Bishop of Wrocław, Rudolf of Rudesheim, a fervent critic of George, instructed Prague: "Take into consideration the fact that Prague was a famous community, which loyally served the Papal See... No nation had a town like Prague; neither Nürnberg, Vienna or Wrocław or even celebrated Köln could equal it. We do not know whether Rome, Venice, Florence or any other town under the sun could match Prague. But also! The moment Prague welcomed deceitful prophets and teachers of errors, and introduced a new order, misfortune befell her, she destroyed her magnificent realm, lost her beautiful buildings, ruined her citizens, and has been reduced to destitution and misery so great that today it would be difficult to discover a poorer community than this one, whose members are contemptuously rejected all over the world"<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Quotation according to: F. Machilek, *Johannes Hoffmann aus Schweidnitz und die Hussiten*, «Archiv für schlesische Kirchengeschichte», vol. XXVI, 1968, p. 111.

<sup>13</sup> *Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium Seculi Decimi Quinti. Concilium Basileense. Scripturum*, vol. I, ed. F. Palacký, E. Birk, Vindobonae 1857, p. 393–394.

<sup>14</sup> Quotation according to: R. Urbánek, *Věk poděbradský*, in: *Ceské dějiny*, vol. III, part 2, Praha 1918, p. 310; cf. A. Lhotsky, *Thomas Ebendorfer — Ein österreichischer Geschichtsschreiber, Theologe und Diplomat des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 1957.

Even at the very end of the fifteenth century Bohuslav Hašitejnnský of Lobkovice, the Renaissance author and talented moralist, inclined towards sarcasm, apotheosized the times of Charles IV and compared them with the destruction and turbulence produced by the Hussites in Prague. In a letter to Kristian Pedík in 1489 he wrote: “During the reign of Charles Prague was the most magnificent commercial town of the German Reich, and its name was celebrated in the whole of Europe. A school of the liberated arts flourished here, monasteries and convents were erected for monks and nuns, brethren of all orders and religions had their seats and the local citizens and arrivals enjoyed their rights. When after the death of Charles his son Wenceslas took over the kingdom, the situation not only in Prague but in the whole country changed and grew disturbed... armies of the Taborites, Orphans and Orebits lay waste everything with iron and fire...”<sup>16</sup>. This “school of liberated arts” was Prague University, founded by Charles IV, which was regarded as a particular cause for pride. A sui generis literary operation even presented the university as the most valuable part of Prague which concentrated all the merits, according to the *pars pro toto* principle. This operation was performed especially upon the occasion of editing ceremonious university documents such as introductions and endings of quodlibets, which, as it follows from their function, employed a rather formalised conceptual apparatus.

An example of such a tendency is the foreword by Andrzej of Brod, a Catholic and later an opponent of the Hussites, to a discussion de quodlibet from the beginning of the fifteenth century. Here, Prague University is described as *hoc Palladis gymnasium* which gathered so many outstanding persons, especially in the department of the liberated arts, and which illuminated all the neighbouring lands and was a source of inspiration for other universities. This rare treasure is the joy of Bohemia and especially of “most noble Prague”<sup>17</sup>. In a questio entitled *Utrum quelibet civitas ad sui*

<sup>15</sup> Z. Nejedlý, *Volba krále Vladislava II roku 1471*, «Český Časopis Historický», vol. XI, 1895, p. 50; on the life and works of Rudolf of Rüdesheim see: J. Z a u n, *Rudolf von Rüdesheim, Fürstbischof von Levant und Breslau. Ein Lebensbild aus dem 15. Jh.*, Frankfurt a. M. 1881; K. Engelbert, *Rudolf von Rüdesheim*, in: *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. IX, Freiburg 1964, p. 90; W. Urban, *Szkice z dziejów diecezji wrocławskiej. Biskup Rudolf z Rüdesheim (From the History of the Wrocław Diocese. Bishop Rudolf of Rüdesheim)*, «Studia Theologica Varsaviensia», vol. IV, 1966, pp. 123–166; J. Drabina, *Działalność dyplomatyczna legata apostolskiego Rudolfa z Rüdesheimu na Śląsku (The Diplomatic Activity of the Rudolf of Rüdesheim, a Legate of the Apostolic See, in Silesia)*, «Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis», no 195, Historia 23, Wrocław 1974, pp. 205–229.

<sup>16</sup> *Listář Bohuslava Hašitejnnského z Lobkovic*, ed. J. Truhlář, Praha 1893, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> *Inceptio super quodlibet*, in: *Geschichtschreiber*, vol. II, p. 155; on the subject of this introduction by Andrew of Brod to the quodlibet cf. J. Kejř, *Struktura a průběh disputace de quodlibet na pražské universitě*, «Acta Universitatis Carolinae» — *Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis*, vol. I, 1960, p. 24 sqq; on Andrew see: J. Kadlec, *Studien und Texte zum Leben und*

*regenciam requirit prudentiam ordinatam* from ca. 1412<sup>18</sup>, another Czech master deduced his arguments on the subject of Prague from a general Aristotelian statement that *cives sunt socii unius civitatis*. “It is suitable”, he added “for all citizens of the capital to live in accordance with morality and in friendship, so that the noble town of Prague could be governed appropriately both for the profit of its inhabitants and for the security of its buildings”<sup>19</sup>.

The prime animators of Bohemian reform, John Hus and Jerome of Prague, also joined the choir of voices praising the town and its academy. They did so, however, at a rather special moment i. e. at the time of the first decade of the fifteenth century, when the development of the University, based on teachings of Wycliffe was seriously threatened by the Archbishop of Prague and the leaders of the German “nation”. In order to save the reform, Hus and Jerome tried to win the support of the king and the authorities of the Old Town of Prague. Both ideologues of the Hussite movement differed as regards these issues; the quodlibet proposed by Hus remains within the framework delineated by a stereotype praise of a town but Jerome discloses a much greater emotional and political involvement. The above mentioned *pars pro toto* principle was especially stressed by Hus who said i. a. “Let trembling lips become silent, let God the Highest be praised, let the most famous Czech kingdom rejoice, and especially the town of Prague since with such a magnificent university it will really distinguish itself...”<sup>20</sup>.

In this way the glory of God grows in people, the community of the Bohemian kingdom rejoices, the town of Prague glows with a radiance and the university is famous for its wealth of science and virtue more than any other academy<sup>21</sup>.

In a praise of the liberal arts, upon the occasion of a quodlibet conducted in January 1409 by Matthew of Knín, Jerome of Prague emphasized the special role of Prague as an environment which develops new ideas. He rejected decidedly charges which claimed that the residents of the capital and the whole kingdom support heresy. It seems worthwhile to cite his words, so different from the stereotype phrases which usually recur in quodlibets: *Si igitur iuxta Salomonis sententiam melius est nomen bonum*

*Wirken des Prager Magisters Andreas von Brod*, Münster 1982.

<sup>18</sup> Ms. X E 24, ff. 345<sup>v</sup>–347<sup>r</sup> in the University (State Library) in Prague.

<sup>19</sup> Quotation according to: J. Kejíř, *Stát, církev a společnost v disputacích na pražské universitě v době Husově a husitské*, Rozpravy Československé Věd, Řada společenských věd vol. LXXIV, nr 14, Praha 1964, p. 44, note 221.

<sup>20</sup> *Magistri Iohannis Hus Quodlibet*, ed. B. Ryba, Praha 1948, p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 218: *Nam sic honor Dei crescit in populis, gaudebit regni Bohemie communitas, fulgebit Praga civitas, habundabit in scienciis et virtutibus pre aliis universitatibus Pragensis universitas...*

*quam unguenta preciosa, per immortalem Deum vos obsecro singulos et universos, qui serenissimi principis Wenceslai, Romanorum et Boemie regis, atque huius regni decorem diligitis quique bonam famam huius sacrosancte civitatis Pragensis sincere amatis, quatenus nomen illud bonum et optimum, quod hucusque in omnibus provinciis habuimus, observare modis quibus poteritis universi et singuli studeatis... Et insuper vos omnes, perprudentissimi consules atque clarissimi cives, quibus tantus honor collatus est a serenissimo principe Wenczeslao, Romanorum et Boemie rege, ut vobis pre ceteris precipue ac vestre providencie suum thesaurum nobilissimum sibi que amatissimam communitatem universorum hominum huius sancte civitatis Pragensis tradidit confidenter ad regendum et ad protegendum... Quicumque igitur quemcunque pure Boemum dixerit fuisse vel esse hereticum... unus pro omnibus respondeo, ut debeo, toto corde, ore pleno, intrepide, quod mentitur ut nullius fide dignus<sup>22</sup>.*

The conflicts between the German and Czech "nations" at the university reached a culmination point in 1409 in the form of the Decree of Kutná Hora which resulted in the departure of the German masters and students from Prague, and, as a consequence, led to the establishment of a university in Leipzig<sup>23</sup>. This step meant that Prague and its representatives which propagated the teachings of Wycliffe, became the object of attacks launched already several years prior to the outbreak of the revolution. One of the German emigrés soon voiced his conviction in the poem *Praga, mater artium*. This sarcastic composition describes the fate of Prague, the "mother of arts and sciences", after the Decree of Kutná Hora. The town became excessively fond of Wycliffe's teachings and changed into a harlot who spreads heresy. At the end of the poem, the author expresses the hope that

<sup>22</sup> *Recommendacio arcium liberalium*, in: *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, ed. B. Havránek, J. Hrabák, J. Daňhelka, vol. I, Praha 1963, p. 245. The entire text of the *Recommendacio* is extant in: Ms. X E 24, ff. 241<sup>r</sup>-250<sup>v</sup> in the University (State) Library in Prague and published, with mistakes, by K. Höfler in: *Geschichtschreiber*, vol. II, p. 112-128; cf. interesting comments in: F. Šmahel, *The Idea of the "Nation" in Hussite Bohemia*, «Historica», vol. XVI, Praha 1969, p. 174 sqq.

<sup>23</sup> The Decree of Kutná Hora, its evaluation and consequences were the topic of many analyses. Cf. K. Höfler, *Magister Johannes Hus und der Abzug der deutschen Professoren und Studenten aus Prag 1409*, Prag 1864; V. Novotný, K. Krofta, J. Šusta, G. Friedrich, *Dekret kutnohorský*, Praha 1909; F. Seibt, *Johannes Hus und der Abzug der deutschen Studenten aus Prag 1409*, «Archiv für Kulturgeschichte», vol. XXIX, 1957, p. 63-80; *Dekret kutnohorský a jeho místo v dějinách*, Acta Universitatis Carolinae — Philosophica et Historica, vol. II, 1959; E. Maleczyńska, *Z dziejów interpretacji Dekretu Kutnohorskiego (From the History of the Interpretation of the Decree of Kutna Hora)*, «Kwartalnik Historyczny», vol. LXVI, 1959, p. 716-725; J. Kejř, *Sporné otázky v bádání o Dekretu kutnohorském*, Acta Universitatis Carolinae — Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis, vol. III, 1962, p. 83-121; F. Seibt, *Hussitica. Zur Struktur einer Revolution*, Köln-Graz, 1965, p. 70 sqq.

the birth of the new academy in Leipzig will inaugurate the end of Prague University which will be deprived both of its fame and honour<sup>24</sup>.

The Decree of Kutná Hora was a political act and resulted in various repercussions and reactions. The negative ones include the opinion contained in *Staré Letopisy České* which expressed sorrow that so many masters and students had left Prague. “Not only Prague but the whole of Bohemia enjoyed great profit and reverence” from the University<sup>25</sup>. It constituted, on the one hand, a source of pride for the capital and, on the other hand, a source of ideas which many described as heretical and even several decades later — in the middle of the fifteenth century it was harshly criticized by Jan Kapistran. Struggling against the Hussite movement, this famous preacher said that the people of Prague who have resigned from obedience to Christ and the Church, were abandoned by God, and the fame of Prague University, with its 30,000 students, had long passed<sup>26</sup>.

The depiction of the Hussite revolution and its beginnings during the reign of Wenceslas IV as an evil continuation of the peaceful and prosperous rule of the most outstanding representative of the Luxemburg dynasty does not exhaust the full storehouse of literary and propaganda tricks used in presenting Hussite Prague. The era in question had produced very simple and effective methods for influencing the masses. Let us recall the enormous role played by Hussite songs, including the famous *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci*. The importance of the preacher’s pulpit which was very often the source of extremely practical contents resembling instructions must be appreciated. At time, the Hussites reached for sophisticated measures of expression such as irony which under the guise of praise, tried to ruthlessly discredit the opponent. This was the tone of the letter written by Sigismund of Luxemburg in 1419, before the siege of Prague by the first anti-Hussite crusade. In it he addressed the residents of Prague who unwaveringly believed in the correctness of Wycliffe’s teachings: “You are a mirror in which the citizens of other lands could seek their reflection. You are a light which illuminates minds dulled with the darkness of ignorance... because you have embellished Prague and the whole of Bohemia with radiant wisdom, you manage without a pope, and do not require a secular kingdom... Who could express all your

<sup>24</sup> Published in: A. Kraus, *Husitství v literatuře prvních dvou století svých*, Praha 1917, vol. I, p. 1; newer edition in: F. Seibt, *Johannes Hus*, p. 77, note 66: *Praga, mater artium / ... Facta nunc adultera / profert realistas / chymaeras et vetera / monstra, Wiclefistas. / ... Iam mater ignobilis, / meretrix immunda, / fel emittit haeresis / velut petram unda. / ... Haeresi felicitas / eius est infecta, / novi Wicleff vanitas / est ei dilecta. / ... Exurge, Lipczk, et gloriam / suscipe Bohemorum, / famam et memoriam, / honorem eorum /*.

<sup>25</sup> *Staré letopisy české*, ed. F. Šimek, Praha 1937, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Letter to Jan Borotin, ed. in: F. Valouch, *Životopis sv. Jana Kapistrana*, Brno 1858, p. 849 sqq.

accomplishments, which you develop daily among new holiness. Verily, such wisdom was, is and will be admired by the monarchs and princes of the whole of Christendom, a wisdom which has been bestowed upon you and which had not even been foretold by the prophets of old"<sup>27</sup>.

Prague was the centre of events in the course of the entire revolution and even during the postrevolutionary stage of the Hussite movement, and it concentrated the interest of all the adherents and opponents of reforms. This growth of the town's prominence encountered the resistance of all those social forces which, despite their access to the reform movement, still regarded themselves as the true representatives of the "Crown of Bohemia"<sup>28</sup>. These claims were enrooted in the already traditionally strong position enjoyed by the gentry<sup>29</sup>, which, during the Hussite period, was even reinforced by the numerous secularized landed estates of the Church. According to Eberhard Windecke, in 1420 the Czech lords who described themselves as "the Crown of Bohemia" were decisive adversaries of the Prague townspeople<sup>30</sup>.

Let us now take a look at the attitude of the Catholic Church towards Hussite Prague. There is no need to explain its general stance but it seems worthwhile to consider particular arguments and ways in which they were presented. We shall employ the *a rebourse* method and upon the basis of an analysis of a clearly pro-Hussite work, try to recreate the opinions of both side, with emphasis placed on the charges launched by the Catholics against Prague. I have in mind *Hádání Prahy s Kutnou Horou*<sup>31</sup> in which the old formula of a debate held before a divine court was exploited for the purpose of a theoretical discussion between Kutna Hora, the bastion of Catholicism, and Hussite Prague. This work was written by an anonymous author<sup>32</sup> at the

<sup>27</sup> *Litera regis Sigismundi, qua inproperat et ironicae scribit Pragensibus, eos quasi deridendo*, in: *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hussitenkrieges in den Jahren 1419–1436*, ed. F. Palacký, vol. II, Prag 1873, p. 523 sqq.

<sup>28</sup> For an analysis of the concept of the "Crown of Bohemia" in Hussite teachings see: Z. Horálková und Kollektiv (J. Macek), *Die Aussagen der alttschechischen Sprache über die mittelalterliche Auffassung des Staates in Böhmen*, «Zeitschrift für Slawistik», vol. XVIII, 1973, p. 842 sqq.

<sup>29</sup> This role is particularly stressed in the so-called *Dalimil Chronicle* from the beginning of the fourteenth century, cf. critical edition: *Nejstarší česká rymované kronika tak řečeného Dalimila*, ed. B. Havránek, J. Daňhelka, Praha 1957, pp. 23, 89, 98 and others. See also: J. Pěčirková, J. Macek, *Semantická analýza staročeského slova obec*, «Listy Filologické», vol. IIIC, 1974, nr 2, p. 89–100; W. Iwańczak, *Tropem rycerskiej przygody. Wzorzec rycerski w piśmiennictwie czeskim XIV wieku (On the Trail of Chivalric Adventure. The Chivalric Model in Czech Writings in the Fourteenth Century)*, Warszawa 1985, p. 35 sqq.

<sup>30</sup> *Eberhard Windeckes Dankwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte des Zeitalters Kaiser Sigismunds*, ed. W. Altmann, Berlin 1893, p. 111: *Wir sind die crone von Behem und nit die geburen...*

<sup>31</sup> This extensive work, some 1990 verses long, is extant with several other Hussite texts in the so-called *Budyšin Manuscript* (the name comes from the place of keeping). Edition in: *Husitské Skladby Budyšinského rukopisu*, ed. J. Daňhelka, Praha 1952, p. 80–165.

end of 1420 i. e. at a time when the capital of Bohemia was experiencing a period of exceptional prosperity. The sympathy of the author was on the side of Prague as is shown already in the portrayal of the appearance of both participants of the debate. Prague is depicted as a handsome woman with light eyes and dressed in samite. Kutná Hora makes a decidedly worse impression. Hunchbacked and blinking, she stares at the ground, shakes her head and, to make matters even worse, lisps. The author does not leave the reader any time to set his imagination into motion and rapidly adds that Kutná Hora's speech is hypocritical<sup>33</sup>. Despite this introductory and *a priori* solution of the debate, the confrontation of the convictions harboured by the two sides appears to be interesting. The construction of the composition is based not on an unrestricted discussion but on a presentation by Kutná Hora of various charges against Prague, to which the latter responds in a brilliant way. To put it simply, one could say that Prague's answers constitute an expanded version of the Four Articles of Prague which had been recently announced in that town<sup>34</sup>. What are the issues mentioned in the debate? Kutná Hora praises the Council of Constance and expresses surprise that Prague does not do the same. Prague answers that it is not the number or greatness of the secular magnates in the Church which is important, but a striving towards truth<sup>35</sup>. Of course, the problem of Hussite iconoclasm had to be mentioned. Charged with destroying holy pictures, Prague explains that they are forbidden by God since they depict evil gods of evil people. In order to justify its stand, it adds that even such a good and honest person like Charles IV melted down gold pictures<sup>36</sup>. This is obviously not the place for solving the extremely complicated problem of Hussite iconoclasm but in order to present the essence of the issue let us quote the opinion of John Hus voiced in the treatise *O svatokupectví*: "A beautiful picture of a saint is shown in the belief that the more colourful it is, the holier it becomes. People

<sup>32</sup> It was proposed that the author was Vavřinec of Břazová, as in the case of other works in the so-called *Budyšin Manuscript* — cf. R. Urbánek, *Satirická skládání Budyšínského rukopisu M. Vavřince z Březové z r. 1420 v rámci ostatní jeho činnosti literární*, *Věstník Královské České Společnosti Nauk, Třída filosof. –filol.* 1951, nr 3, p. 1–38; F. N. Bartoš, *Z politické literatury doby husitské*, «Sborník Historický», vol. V, 1957, p. 47 sqq.

<sup>33</sup> *Husitské skladby*, p. 80, sqq.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. F. M. Bartoš, *Do čtyř pražských articulů*, «Sborník Příspěvků k dějinám Hlavního Města Prahy», nr 5, 1932, p. 481–591; i dem, *Manifesty města Prahy z doby husitské*, *ibidem*, nr 7, 1932, p. 253 sqq.; J. Macek, *Tábor v husitském revolučním hnutí*, vol. II, Praha 1955, p. 219 sqq.; L. Lancinger, *Čtyři artikuly pražské a podíl univerzitních mistrů a jejich vývoji*, *Acta Universitatis Carolinae — Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis*, vol. III, nr 2, 1962, p. 3–61; H. Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1967, p. 373, note 32.

<sup>35</sup> *Husitské skladby*, p. 92.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 95 sqq.

come to kiss it and are summoned to give alms... The Church decorates its stones with gold and leaves its sons naked..."<sup>37</sup>.

The response made by Prague to the polemical attacks formulated by Kutná Hora sounds equally decisive. The accusation of the murder and burning of priests and other people is refuted by the statement that everything is permitted for the sake of the faith<sup>38</sup>. Asked why churches lack holy water and do not bless Easter lambs, salt or candles, Prague answered that sins should not be eliminated with kisses or sprinkling of water, but by penance<sup>39</sup>. The debate concerns not only issues connected with the Church, religion or liturgy but also everyday secular life. Kutná Hora shows surprise that Prague banishes harlots, and forbids games and dances considering that they existed "for always", and it is impossible to lead only a serious and sad life. The capital answers with unshakable logic that the antiquity of a sin does not diminish it<sup>40</sup>. Finally, the debate is solved by the head of the heavenly tribunal i. e. Christ, in favour of Prague which, however, is criticized for the fact that many of its sons are not concerned with the truth. Of course, this is the well-known Hussite motif of truth, which constituted one of the central concepts of the time.

In the course of the fifteenth century, the victorious Hussite movement as portrayed in the above outlined controversy, was considerably isolated by the Church as a heresy, a fact which was reflected in the language of the period which identified "Bohemian" with "heretic"<sup>41</sup>. An attempt at institutional independence made by the Hussites, by creating their own church organization with an archbishop of Prague accepted by Rome, failed. The compromise nature of the conclusion of the Hussite revolution was continued by the later undertakings of Calixtine Prague. In 1448 Cardinal Juan Carvajal, the papal legate, arrived in Prague and the *Staré Letopisy České* retained the text of the formula of the ceremonious welcome in honour of

<sup>37</sup> Quotation according to: K. Stejskal, *Funkce obrazu v husitství*, «Husitský Tábor», nr 8, 1985, p. 21. On Hussite iconoclasm cf. K. Chytil, *Antikrist v naukách a umění středověku a husitské obrazné antiikese*, Praha 1918; K. Stejskal, *Husitské obrazoborectví*, «Dějiny a současnost», vol. I, nr 5, 1959, pp. 16–19; H. Bredekamp, *Bildersturm und Bildpropaganda in der Hussitenbewegung Tendenzen*, «Bildende Kunst», 1975, fol. 3; idem, *Kunst als Medium sozialer Konflikte. Bilderkämpfe von der Spätantike bis zur Hussitenrevolution*, Frankfurt a. M. 1975; «Husitský Tábor», nr 8, 1985 also includes material from the III Symposium on Hussitism held in 1983 in Těbor, with texts about Hussite iconoclasm by J. Krása, J. Nechutová, J. Chlíbec and N. Rejchrtová.

<sup>38</sup> *Husitské skladby*, p. 115 sqq.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 125.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 158 sqq.

<sup>41</sup> F. Graus, *Prag*, p. 45; S. Bylina, *Wizerunek heretyka w Polsce średniowiecznej (The Image of the Heretic in Medieval Poland)*, «Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce», vol. 30, 1985, p. 5–24.

the venerable guest, who was met by “the whole famous town of Prague”<sup>42</sup>. The attitude of the Church hierarchy towards the capital was quite often far from forgiving. Gabriel Rangoni of Verona, a papal legate and one of the authors who opposed George of Podiebrady, maintained that Prague no longer deserved to be called a town and remained only a heretical village<sup>43</sup>. The earlier mentioned author, Rudolf of Rudsheim, the bishop of Wrocław<sup>44</sup>, and Bohuslav Hasistejnský of Lobkovice<sup>45</sup> predicted at the end of the fifteenth century less unfavourable perspectives. Both claimed that the only chance lay in a return to the true faith and the Church, and in the severance of all bonds with Hussitism.

It was not always easy, even for the representatives of the Church hierarchy, to opt for a stand which would condemn the Hussites unambiguously. An excellent example of such dilemmas and wavering feelings was Jan of Rabštejn. A graduate of Italian universities, a parish priest of Vyšehrad, and a diplomat in the service of George of Poděbrady, he belonged to a group of early humanistic authors, not only as a result of his elegant Latin but also due to the spirit of tolerance permeating the *Dialogus* which he wrote in 1469<sup>46</sup>. Here, the formula of a debate conducted by two persons, which was employed in the earlier analyzed “Hládání Prahy s Kutnou Horou” was replaced by a dialogue between four persons, who included three representatives of the Catholic gentry and the author. The Hussite movement for Jan of Rabštejn was not a phenomenon which could be univocally condemned, and he decidedly opposed overcoming it by means of “fire and sword”; more, he admitted that he admired those Czeches who for so many years opposed foreign powers. In a situation of a threat to the existence of the Czech community, the division into Hussites and Catholics should be considered as secondary. Prague is particularly lauded by Jan as the centre of the country. He even permitted himself, with a panache typical

<sup>42</sup> *Staré letopisy*, p. 105.

<sup>43</sup> R. Urbánek, *Věk poděbradský*, in: *České dějiny*, vol. III, part 1, Praha 1915, p. 45; on Rangoni see: A. Bařtagia, *Fra Gabriele Rangoni di Chiari, vescovo e cardinale dell'ordine dei minori osservanti*, Venezia 1881.

<sup>44</sup> Z. Nejedlý, *Volba*, p. 50.

<sup>45</sup> Letter of 10 October 1493 to Jan of Domašlav, in: *Listář Bohuslava*, p. 48; *Nam quis tam extreme in patriam impius est, ut conversione nobilissimae huius civitatis (que non solum Bohemiae caput est, sed Germaniae etiam decus atque ornamentum) toto pectore non delectetur? Neque enim dubium est caeteros quoque minoris nominis populos Pragae ad sanitatem redituros.*

<sup>46</sup> Jan of Rabštejn, *Dialogus*, ed. B. Ryba, Praha 1946; the author and the work are presented in: A. Bachmann, *Bemerkungen zu Johann'a von Rabenstein "Dialogus"*, V. Jahresbericht der deutschen St. Real-Gymnasium in Prag 1877; J. Truhlář, *Počátky humanismu v Čechách*, Praha 1892, p. 29 sqq., B. Mendl, *Knihovna Jana z Rabštejna*, «Rozhledy po literatuře a umění», vol. I, 1932, p. 89 sqq.; B. Ryba, *K biografii humanisty Jana z Rabštejna*, «Český Časopis Historický», vol. XXXVI, 1940, p. 260–272.

for a humanist, to use the following parallel: *Roma semel Gallorum non ferens impetum corrui: at Pragensis urbs quam plurimas Gallicanis maiores clades sustinens in hodiernum diem adhuc potens perserverat*<sup>47</sup>. The negative, with certain exceptions, stand of the Catholic Church as regards the endeavours of the Prague Hussites appears to be obvious, but opinions within the Hussite camp are more ambiguous. The main dividing line ran between the radical and moderate parties, which to a certain measure corresponded to the distinction between the Taborites and Calixtines.

The spring and summer of 1419 were a period when under the impact of chiliastic prophecies the population gathered in the mountains and five select towns. All other towns, with the exception of the chose ones, were to share the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah<sup>48</sup>. Those doomed to devastation also included Prague. Originally, its name was not mentioned but soon the Taborite Articles of 1420 left no doubt. The time of revenge had come and Prague, that great Babylon, was to be burned down and destroyed with all other towns, villages and castles<sup>49</sup>.

Such a radical opinion encountered a fervent polemic which was presented in an anti-chiliastic treatise *Ad occurrendum* by Jan of Přebor<sup>50</sup>. The author, a former master at Prague University, did not conceal his condescending and even contemptuous attitude towards his unlearned Taborite adversaries. He was of the opinion that plans for burning down Prague by the faithful are nothing else but a wickedness. Prague, which the author described as the mother of towns in Israel, a town of sciences and the mother of truth, cannot be treated in this manner. Such plans would signify the destruction of all truth in the Kingdom of Bohemia. Once again, we deal with divine truth, a key problem for Hussite ideology. Prague, in the estimation of Jan, is not Babylon but Jerusalem<sup>51</sup>, and a servant of God. The veracity of this fact is confirmed by its famous victories over innumerable

<sup>47</sup> Jan z Rabštejna, *Dialogus*, p. 96.

<sup>48</sup> Those five towns included Pílno, Zatec, Louny, Slaný and Klatovy. Cf. the *Chronicle by Vavřinec of Březová*, ed. J. Goll, *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. V, Praha 1893, p. 355 sqq.; *Staré letopisy*, p. 27; J. Macek, *Tábor*, vol. I, p. 216 sqq.; H. Kaminsky, *A History*, p. 311 sqq.; F. Šmahel, *Husitské město "Slunce"*. *Plzeň na přelomu let 1419–1420*, «Minulosti Zapadočeského Kraje», vol. XIX, 1983, p. 137–152.

<sup>49</sup> *Archiv český čili Staré písemné památky české i moravské*, vol. 3, ed. F. Palacký, Praha 184, p. 219; F. Machilek, *Revolution und Heilserwartung der Taboriten 1419/21*, in: *Festiva lanx. Studien zum mittelalterlichen Geistesleben*, ed. K. Schnith, München 1967, p. 79 sqq.

<sup>50</sup> K. Krofta, *O některých spisach M. Jana z Přeborě*, «Časopis Českého Musea», vol. LXXIII, 1899, p. 209–220; H. Kaminsky, *K dějinám chiliastického Tábora. O traktátu Ad occurrendum domini insano*, «Československý Česopis Historický», vol. VIII, 1960, p. 895–904.

<sup>51</sup> Ms. 4749, f. 71<sup>v</sup> in: Nationalbibliothek, Vienna: Prague is *matrem civitatum in Israhel and Jerusalem super quam invocatum est nomen fortissimi Dei*, quoted according to: H. Kaminsky, *A History*, p. 410, note 72.

opponents and the seizure of Vyšehrad, the strongest fortress in the Kingdom<sup>52</sup>.

The divergencies between the townspeople of Prague and the Taborites have been presented in an even more vivid manner in a slightly later composition entitled: *Václav Havel a Tábor*, published in 1424. The main three heroes do not include a representative of Prague who only appears upon several occasions in the conversation. The Catholic Václav charges Tábor that his companions have ruined Prague, which is the fame, embellishment, protection, council and reverence of the Crown of Bohemia<sup>53</sup>. Tabor answers the accusations of pillage, violence and murders, supposedly committed in Prague by the Taborites, that such untrue information is only spread by the people of Prague. How can they be believed, he adds, if in the past they forbade anyone to be charged with heresy and now wish to curse us as heretics?<sup>54</sup> The townsmen of Prague, argued Tábor, pulled down and looted churches, and used the stones from the ruined sacral buildings on Vitkov Hill. This allusion refers to concrete events when Prague was readying to repel Sigismund of Luxemburg, the commander of the first anti-Hussite crusade composed of a great number of knights. Fortifications were erected on Vitkov Hill together with the Taborites who came to render help.

The brief spell of cooperation between Prague and Tábor was variously assessed by contemporaries. Vavřinec of Březová regarded as foolish those representatives of the capital who, together with the Taborites “acted like dumb beasts, mad dogs and roaring lions”<sup>55</sup>. In order to supplement this picture, let us add that the celebrated Prague theologian, Jakoubek of Stříbro, who is correctly regarded as the author of Utraquism, also did not have the best opinion about Prague which he described as a wanton harlot<sup>56</sup>. It would be difficult to find any attributes proper for a capital city and a representative of the Kingdom of Bohemia in his words. The above cited arguments show that Prague and its inhabitants were criticized by different side, not only as one could expect, by the Catholics, but also by the Hussites, radicals and moderates. This situation, at times astonishing, was presumably the outcome of the evolution of the Hussite movement, changing attitudes and opinions,

<sup>52</sup> According to: K. Krofta, *O některých spisech*, p. 213, note 10, that Prague *XL principes et gentem de tot regnis collectam innumere multitudinis fidelibus lacrimis devotisque oracionibus superavit et viriliter stans et resistens usque in finem effugavit et in alio bello miraculoso XVIII Barones una cum multitudine hostium interfecit et fortissimum castrum regni Wissegradense debellavit*.

<sup>53</sup> *Veršovane skladby doby husitské*, ed. F. Svejkovský, Praha 1963, p. 143.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 144.

<sup>55</sup> R. Urbánek, *Věk poděbradský*, part I, p. 44.

<sup>56</sup> Jakoubek of Stříbro, *Vyklad na Zjevenie sv. Jana*, ed. F. Šimek, vol. I, Praha 1932, p. 511: *Šelma i žena zjevná, totiž kurva*.

and the diversity of the population of Prague itself. For example, the already mentioned Jan of Pířbram, was originally the student of Matthew of Janov, one of the fathers of the reform movement, then became a fervent supporter of Hus, and, having joined the moderate side, vehemently opposed the Taborites and, together with the higher gentry, tried to come to an arrangement with the Church.

In the next part of our reflections, let us try to trace the aspirations harboured by Prague itself, which in the period of the Hussite revolution were expressed in multiple forms. On the one hand, we deal with complaints addressed to political leaders, and, on the other hand, with the exploitation of certain symbolic and even theological signs and values.

The special role played by Prague as a center of a religious cult, and the seat of secular authorities, was noticed already in the Early Middle Ages. The *Life of St. Adalbert* edited in the last part of the tenth century, probably by Jan Kanaparius, describes Prague as *sancta civitas*. The reason for the use of this term was the memory of St. Wenceslas who in Prague *quondam regnum tenuit ac in Dei servitio vivere suum egregie perduxit; postea vero sub impii fratris ferro nobile martyrium consumans, manifestis indiciis ac ingentibus usque hodie miraculis sua merita probat*<sup>57</sup>. The *Life of Emperor Henry II*, written by Adalbold, the Bishop of Utrecht, speaks about Prague Castle (1003) using the expression that Prague is *caput Bohemiae*<sup>58</sup>.

The exceptional place of the capital attracted the attention of the authors from the period preceding the Hussite movement. In a funeral speech from 1400, Matthew of Legnica used the term *sancta civitas Praga*<sup>59</sup>. An anonymous author places Prague among the most famous towns of Europe. Like a star-studded sky, it shines with many masters, the beauty of women, the wisdom and generosity of the burghers; it is another Paris, Bologne, Salerno and Rome, and the birthplace of semi-gods. How happy is Bohemia to have given birth to "this sweet daughter" whose fame reaches celestial heights<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, Series Nova*, ed. J. Karwasińska, vol. IV, part 1, Warszawa 1962, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> *Vita Heinrici II imperatoris*, ed. W. Waitz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. IV, Berlin 1841, p. 689.

<sup>59</sup> *Sermo Magistri Mathie de Legnic factus coram archiepiscopo Pragensi in exequiis* — G. Sommerfeldt, *Die Leichenpredigt des Magisters Matthias von Liegnitz auf den Tod des Prager Erzbischofs Johann von Jenstein*, «Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen», vol. XXXXII, 1904, p. 271.

<sup>60</sup> *Ammonitio baccalaureandi*, in: *Geschichtschreiber*, vol. II, p. 111. On works expressing the medieval praise of towns see: J. K. Hyde, *Medieval Descriptions of Cities*, «Bulletin of the John Rylands Library», vol. III, no 1, p. 338 sqq. (a list of works); E. Giegler, *Das Genos der Laudes urbium in lateinischen Mittelalter. Beiträge zur Topik des Städtelobes und der Stadtschilderung*, Phil. Diss. Wurzburg 1953 (manuscript); A. Blaschka, *Von Prag bis Leipzig. Zum Wandel des Städtelobes*, "WZ d. Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg", *Gesch. -Sprachwiss.*, vol. VIII, nr 6, 1959; A. Kraus, *Civitas Regis. Das Bild Regensburgs in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung*

Hussite Prague formulated an extremely ambitious programme and came closest to the stage of its realization during the initial period of the revolution. The exceptional nature of the town was already noticed earlier, but it was not considered in categories of political domination but rather in a symbolic–sacral domain. Suffice it to recall that when after the burning of John Hus in Constance in 1415 the Czech and Moravian gentry gathered in Prague to issue a ceremonious protest letter, no mention was made of any role played by the townspeople<sup>61</sup>. In the first years of the Hussite revolution such a situation would have been unthinkable. Even prior to 1419 Prague was mentioned in the intitulation of documents ahead of the lords, especially when royal power grew weaker or the monarch was absent. After the Prague Defenestration (30 July 1419) the political rank of the capital increased almost from day to day. For the first time, the aldermen of the New Town were appointed not by the king or his officials but elected by the commune of the Prague towns<sup>62</sup>. The most important test of the possibilities of the city was the great anti–Hussite crusade which, led by Sigismund of Luxemburg, besieged Prague in 1420. A magnificent victory over the army of the powerful opponent was won on 30 July 1420 on Vitkov Hill<sup>63</sup>, placing Prague at the head of the union of towns which attained hegemony and decided about the future course of the revolution<sup>64</sup>. The victory on Vitkov Hill was immediately exploited for propaganda purposes, producing

*des Mittelalter*, Kallmünz 1972; H. Weisshaar–Kiem, *Die Reichs- und Residenzstädte Bayerns in Lobschriften und Beschreibungen bis 1800*. Geschichte der Texte und Bibliographie, München 1982.

<sup>61</sup> The text of the letter in: *Documenta Mag. Jogannis Hus vitam, doctrinam, causam in Constantiensi concilio actam et controversia de religione in Bohemia annis 1403–18 motas illustrantia*, Praha 1869 (reprint Osnatbrück 1966), p. 580–584 and in: V. Novotný, *Hus v Kostnici a česká šlechta*, Praha 1915, p. 59–71 (cf. review by J. Peškař in: «Český Časopis Historický», vol. XXI, 1915, p. 400).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. J. Čelakovský, *O vývoji středověkého zřízení radního v městech Pražských*, «Sborník Příspěvků k dějinám Hlavního Města Prahy», nr 1–2, 1907, p. 159.

<sup>63</sup> See: F. Bezdold, *König Sigismund und die Reichskriege gegen die Hussiten*, vol. I, München 1872, p. 40 sqq; R. Urbánek, *Bitva na Vitkově. K položení základního kamene pomníku Jana Žižky z Trocnova na vrchu Žižkově dne 28. června 1920*, Praha 1920; F. M. Bartoš, *Okolo bitvy na Vitkově*, «Vojenské rozhledy», vol. V, 1924, pp. 371–375; P. Čornej, *Bitva na Vitkově a zhroutilí Zikmundovy křížové výpravy v létě 1420*, «Husitský Tábor», nr 90, 1986/1987, p. 101–152.

<sup>64</sup> The role of the town union and the position of Prague in the Hussite revolution are discussed in: S. Binder, *Die Hegemonie der Prager im Hussitenkrieg*. «Prager Studien», vol. VIII/IX, Prag 1901–1903; F. Seibt, *Communitas Primogenita. Zur Prager Hegemonialpolitik in der hussitischen Revolution*, «Historisches Jahrbuch», LXXXI, 1962, p. 80–100; idem, *Hussitica*, chapter IV; F. M. Bartoš, *Vznik svazu husitských měst v čele s Prahou na počátku revoluce*, «Československý Časopis Historický», vol. XV, 1967, p. 865–870; J. Mezník, *Tábor a Staré Město Pražské*, ibidem, vol. XIX, 1971, p. 45–51; F. Šmahel, *Idea*, especially p. 109 sqq; K. Hruby, *Senior Communitas — Eine revolutionäre Institution der Prager hussitischen Bürgerschaft*, «Bohemia Jahrbuch», vol. XIII, 1972, p. 9–43; P. Čornej, *Pojmenování Prahy v narativních pramenech doby husitské*, *Documenta Pragensia*, vol. IV, 1984.

a rhymed composition which enumerated all the countries, peoples and lands whose representatives joined the army led by Sigismund. The list mentions 48 nations outside Bohemia as well as the numerous lords, towns and clergymen from Bohemia who supported the king<sup>65</sup>. This long list, of course, was to emphasize the accomplishments of Prague which was able to resist such a strong coalition. The capital issued manifestos which were circulated not only all over the country but also reached the distant recesses of Europe, propagating Hussite ideas<sup>66</sup>. The manifesto of the people of Prague (April 1420) summoned all “the kind and loyal friends of the Kingdom of Bohemia to come to an agreement with the two communes of the Old and New Town of Prague, to make an arrangement as one man, and to remain constant... so that in this fashion they could free the most Christian kingdom from the injuries and oppression suffered by our nation, with the help of Omnipotent Lord God, and famous St. Wenceslas, our patron”<sup>67</sup>. The manifesto was harshly critical in reference to the Church and the papacy, which proclaimed a crusade against the Hussites but did not as yet include personal attacks against Sigismund of Luxemburg, which were soon to become universal.

During a short period of time — 1420–1421 — Prague was the object of an intensive propaganda campaign<sup>68</sup> and played the role of a symbol of the unity of the Crown of Bohemia. On 20 July 1420, upon the occasion of the proclamation of the Four Articles of Prague, the capital was described as *felix et inclita Pragensis civitas*<sup>69</sup>, and the work entitled *Audite, celi*, issued on the same day, says that Prague is *primogenita, excellencior, cerissima communitas* and *zeletrix honoris* of the Crown<sup>70</sup>. Yet another composition, entitled *Sermo in anniversario Karoli imperatoris* describes the town as *inclita civitas*<sup>71</sup>. The phrases of the topos which are supposed to reflect the glory of the town in *Audite celi* which Ferdinand Seibt described as a propaganda work<sup>72</sup>, already clearly emphasize political leadership. The celebrated chronicler of the Hussite movement, Vavřinec of Březová, admits

<sup>65</sup> Text in: *Husitské skladby*, p. 41 sqq.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. F. M. Bartoš, *Manifesty; Husitské manifesty*, ed. A. Molnár, Praha 1980.

<sup>67</sup> *Výbor*, ed. B. Havránek, vol. I, p. 445.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. F. Seibt, *Vom Vítkov zum Vyšehrad, Der Kampf um die Böhmisches Krone 1420 im Licht der Prager Propaganda*, «Historisches Jahrbuch», vol. LXXXIV, 1974, p. 89–117.

<sup>69</sup> F. M. Bartoš, *Manifesty*, p. 282.

<sup>70</sup> *Husitské skladby*, p. 173.

<sup>71</sup> Edition in: J. Tříška, *Starší pražská univerzitní literatura a karlovska tradice*, Praha 1978, p. 87.

<sup>72</sup> F. Seibt, *Slyšte nebesa. Rine hussitische Propagandaschrift*, «Bohemia Jahrbuch», vol. VI. 1960, p. 112–121.

to this trend by ascribing to Prague the main role in the successful confrontation with Sigismund of Luxemburg<sup>73</sup>.

Prague, therefore, appeared to be a town which determined the trend of the development of the Hussite revolution but, at the same time, increasingly emphasized its religious and spiritual leadership. Jan Želivský, a preacher from Prague who in the initial period played a very important role in the town, placed his hopes for the realization of reforms on the capital. This tendency is demonstrated by an apostrophe from August 1419: "Oh, if the Prague community could now become an example and pattern for all the faithful, not only in Moravia but also in Hungary, Poland and Austria"<sup>74</sup>. The postulate formulated by Želivský, stressing the significance of Prague as a model to be imitated by entire Christendom, is accompanied by other operations which refer to the Czech capital in metaphores and terminology borrowed from the Scriptures. For the Hussites, Prague was another Jerusalem<sup>75</sup> which was to lead warriors of the reform to an ultimate victory. This conviction was expressed by the anonymous author of one of the Hussite songs most permeated with ideology: *Povstaň, povstaň, Veliké Město pražské* in which elements of a specifically comprehended patriotism are intermingled with distinct nationalism:

"Arise, arise, Great Town of Prague,  
the entire faithful masses of the Czech land...  
against the Babylonian king,  
who threatens Jerusalem,  
the Prague commune and its loyal people"<sup>76</sup>.

The Expression "Great Town of Prague" refers in this context to the Old Town which at the time of the song's origin (presumably prior to the middle of April 1420) was still inclined to negotiate with Sigismund of Luxemburg. The author of the song came probably from the New Town in Prague, which was determined to put up armed resistance. Prague as Jerusalem, facing the king of Babylon, i. e. Sigismund of Luxemburg, is a metaphor which in the further parts of the song is supported by the following argument:

<sup>73</sup> *Chronicle by Vavřinec of Březova* p. 354.

<sup>74</sup> Ms. M S V G 3. f46<sup>v</sup> in the University (State) Library in Prague: *O utinam nunc tempore isto Praga civitas esset forma omnibus credentibus, non solum in Moravia, sed in Ungaria, Polonia, Austria*; cf. B. A u s t e č k a, *Jan Želivský jako politik*, Praha 1925, p. 68, note 54; F. M a c h i l e k, *Böhmen, Polen und die hussitische Revolution*, «Zeitschrift für Ostforschung», vol. XXIII, 1974, p. 406.

<sup>75</sup> For literature about the "chosen town" in the Middle Ages cf. R. K o n r a d, *Das himmlische und das irdische Jerusalem im mittelalterlichen. Denken. Mystische Vorstellung und geistliche Wirkung*, in: *Speculum Historiale*, Freiburg-München 1965, p. 523-540.

<sup>76</sup> *Výbor*, ed. B. H a v r á n e k, vol. I, p. 322. On the song cf. Z. N e j e d l ý, *Dějiny husitského zpěvu*, II ed., vol. 4, Praha 1955, p. 319 sqq., vol. 5, Praha 1955, p. 34 sqq.

“There is no need to fear the Hungarian king,  
a man of little honour and fame,  
because he will be defeated by the humble people”<sup>77</sup>,

and further on by Biblical references:

“The widow Judith with her humble life,  
defeated mighty Holofernes  
and cut off his head with his sword,  
in his own tent.

Choose, therefore, a noble ruler,  
a friend of God’s law  
who will defeat the cruel Holofernes”<sup>78</sup>.

The comparison of Prague to Jerusalem in Hussite songs and sermons was used on several occasions e. g. in the song *Dietky, v hromadu se senděme*<sup>79</sup> or in the anonymous sermon written around 1425<sup>80</sup>.

During his unsuccessful siege of Prague, Sigismund of Luxemburg, who tried to retain his monarchic aspirations, was crowned King of Bohemia on 28 July 1420 in the St. Vitus cathedral by Archbishop Konrad of Vechta<sup>81</sup>. The propaganda response of the capital was the satirical work entitled “*Porok Koruny České*”. Its author, who some scholars tend to identify as Vavřinec of Březová<sup>82</sup>, decidedly opposed the coronation which was performed in the presence of merely several representatives of the gentry and in the total absence of the townspeople. He protested in the following words:

“Prague is the head  
of the Bohemian kingdom,  
and all righteous Czechs  
are obedient to it,  
the layman and the clergyman always  
trustingly expect truth from it.  
It is the source of order, glory and fame, celebrated throughout the  
whole world!”<sup>83</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> *Výbor*, ed. B. Havránek, vol. I, p. 323.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 325 sqq.; cf. F. M. Bartoš, *Jistebnický kancionál a Betlémská kaple*, «Jihočeský Sborník Historický», vol. XX, 1951, p. 3, note 8.

<sup>80</sup> F. M. Bartoš, *Útok pražského kazatele na Tábor*, *ibidem*, vol. XXII, 1953, p. 30.

<sup>81</sup> V. Bartůněk, *Konrad von Vechta. Erzbischof von Prag*, in: *Regensburg und Böhmen. Festschrift zur Tausendjahrfeier des Regierungsantrittes Bischof Wolfgangs von Regensburg und der Errichtung des Bistums Prag*, ed. G. Schwaiger, J. Staber, Regensburg 1972, pp. 173–219; I. Hlaváček, *Konrad von Vechta. Ein Niedersachse im spätmittelalterlichen Böhmen*, in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Stadt Vechta*, vol. 1, Vechta 1974, p. 5–35; P. Čornej, *Bitva na Vitkově*, p. 138 sqq.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. note 32.

The fact that Prague reserves for itself the role of an arbiter as regards secular and ecclesiastical issues seems particularly worthy of attention. Above all, we observe a characteristic reversal of the heretofore binding hierarchy of values. Traditionally, Prague was regarded as the seat of monarchic power but now it is no longer the king who endows the town with fame and splendor but vice versa<sup>84</sup>. Those theoretical ambitions are confirmed by means of select concepts. Mention is made of the archbishop of Prague and not of Bohemia, and the same holds true for the office of the burgrave. The royal castle is described as Prague Castle and even *groschen* are described as from Prague and not royal or from Kutna Hora<sup>85</sup>. For the author, Prague constitutes the only center of governance:

“The veneration of Prague consists of the fact that he who is worthy of the lion and the crown, is the ruler of Prague. Therefore, a king who does not have Prague is headless and illegitimate”<sup>86</sup>.

Rule over Prague was the only measure for the legitimization of royal authority and Sigismund of Luxemburg ignored that basic condition. His error was shared by all those who attended his unlawful coronation<sup>87</sup>.

The theoretical elevation of Prague to such heights did not, after all, signify an anti-monarchic doctrine or claims to taking over royal functions. Nonetheless, the opponents of Hussite reform formulated such charges. In the earlier cited *Litera de civitate Pragensi* the town is accused of preparing a plan of depriving the king of the throne and changing the system of governance:

*Quo facto cogitasti consilium, quod non poteris stabilire, dixisti: congregabo militum et clientulorum exercitum, fractis calicibus et monstranciis dabo stipendium multis politicis, congregabo vulgarem populum, sic triumpho potiar contra renitentiam singulorum; civitates, fortalitia tributis subijciam, barones et nobiles in feudum redigam et compellam et sic utar velut Ratispona seu Venetia perpetua libertate. Regem habebō quemadmodum Veneti ducem suum. Hoc erat consilium, haec finalis intentio quatenus domina voceris omnium*<sup>88</sup>. It is difficult to judge the degree to which the

<sup>83</sup> *Husitské skladby*, p. 67.

<sup>84</sup> Similar albeit not so strongly accented tendencies occurred in German towns, due to the particular nature of the Reich. See: W. ZORN, *Die politische und soziale Bedeutung des Reichstadsbürgerturns im Spätmittelalter*, «Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte», vol. XXIV, 1961, p. 460–480, especially p. 466.

<sup>85</sup> *Husitské skladby*, p. 67.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 67.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 68.

project reflected the actual political tendencies among the Prague elite of power, and the degree to which it was a convenient propaganda invective used by its opponents. The contacts between Prague and Venice were not kept secret, and the Czech capital even sent one of its Hussite manifestos to the town of St. Mark<sup>89</sup> but presumably it did not harbour serious thoughts about replacing the monarchy with some form of a town republic.

The ideological and propaganda prominence of the capital in the initial stage of the revolution was justified by its actual possibilities. Prague headed a union of towns and won a number of spectacular successes. On 24 April 1421, according to Vavřinec of Březová, the people of Kutna Hora, Prague's traditional rival, were compelled to beg on their knees for forgiveness and were granted peace "by God and the people of Prague"<sup>90</sup>. An evident effect of the growing role of Prague were the decisions of the diet in Časlav (June 1421). Here, representatives of the capital acted as an independent political factor and together with the lords and lower gentry expressed their opinions about issues pertaining to the whole country. The twenty regents elected by the diet to steer and administer the country during the interregnum included eight burghers, of whom four came from Prague. This proportion was a great success of the towns, and in particular of the capital. The dominating position held by Prague was reflected in the end protocol of the debates. The signatories of the act included, in the first place, representatives of the municipal authorities and the communes of the Old and New Town of Prague. They were followed, contrary to the traditionally established order of ranks, by Konrad of Vechta, the Archbishop of Prague, who had joined the Hussites, and the great lords: Oldřich of Rožmberk, Čenek of Vartenberk and other members of the nobility. The list ends with "other lords, knights, lesser lords, towns and communes..."<sup>91</sup>.

Following the diet in Časlav, the role played by Prague began slowly to decline. This fact is reflected i. a. in notes concerning successive diets and assemblies in which the capital participated. For example, the diet in Prague which took place on 1 November 1423, and which was supposed to confirm

<sup>88</sup> *Geschichtschreiber*, vol. II, p. 315.

<sup>89</sup> The original version of the manifesto of 10 July 1420 has not been discovered, and the only known copy is: Ms of the National Museum in Budapest Cod. medii aevi 260, f. 16<sup>v</sup>-18<sup>r</sup>, ed. F. M. Bartoš, *Manifesty*, p. 278-282, cf. *idem*, *Z publicistiky husitského odboje*, «Listy Filologické», vol. LV, 1928, p. 339; B. Zane, *Některé poznámky o stycích mezi Benátkami a husitskými Čechami po roce 1420*, «Husitský Tábor», nr 4, 1981, p. 139-141.

<sup>90</sup> *The Chronicle of Vavřinec of Březova*, p. 480: *a deo et Pragensibus*.

<sup>91</sup> Edited in: *Archiv český*, vol. III, p. 226-230; *Výbor z literatury české*, ed. K. J. Erben, vol. II, part 1, Praha 1897, p. 384 sqq; on the diet in Časlav see: J. Pekař, *Žižka*, vol. III, Praha 1930, p. 96-104; *ibidem*, vol. IV, p. 69 sqq; F. G. Heymann, *The National Assembly of Časlav*, «Medievalia et Humanistica», nr 8, 1954, p. 32-35; I. Hlaváček, *Husitské sněmy*, «Sborník Historický», nr 4, 1956, p. 78 sqq; F. Seibt, *Husitica*, p. 167 sqq.

the decisions of the previous diet in Köln, and concerned the establishment of political administration in Bohemia, reveals a different order of participants. The list begins with Konrad of Vechta, the Archbishop of Prague, followed by the greatest lords, the representatives of Prague, lords and then "other lords, knights, lesser lords, towns and communes of Bohemia..."<sup>92</sup>.

The diminishing possibilities of the capital as the actual head of the Hussite movement were sustained for quite a long time in the realm of postulates, and at times assumed the form of religious rhetorics. This was the case in the speech given by Peter Payne who in 1429 during a convention in Bratislava, in the presence of Sigismund of Luxemburg, described Christ as an "invincible knight and Prague warrior"<sup>93</sup>.

The ambitions of the new post-revolutionary Calixtine patriciate in Prague were revealed sporadically. In about 1440 an apocryphic collection of the laws of the Old Town of Prague, the so-called *Sobieslav Laws*, was probably prepared by Nicholas of Humpolc. The tendency of this is very clearcut and ascribed to Prague unusually broad competences and rights. The author believed that during an interregnum the state should be ruled by the mayor of the Old Town: "... if the ruler of Bohemia would be without an heir, then the mayor of the Old Town in Prague is to govern the orphaned country until a new ruler is elected. All other towns are to show him the same obedience as to a monarch... and all officials are to heed him as a rule who governs in the majesty of the law"<sup>94</sup>. The election of the king is to take place in the townhall of the Old Town. If in the course of three days the electors should be unable to choose a new monarch, then the final decision is to be made by representatives of Prague. The Old Town is to be independent from the decisions of the *subcamerarius*, who controlled the royal towns, and all other officials, and to be the direct subject of the monarch, similarly to the great lords.

The *Sobieslav Laws* which were supposedly granted to Prague already by Duke Sobieslav II in the second half of the twelfth century, exaggerated the role of the capital in the Kingdom of Bohemia to the limits of absurdity. At the same time, even at the end of the fifteenth century, mention was made of a project to situate the imperial capital in Prague, probably out of concern

<sup>92</sup> *Výbor*, ed. K. J. Erben, vol. II, part 1, p. 391.

<sup>93</sup> *Petri Payne Anglici Positio, replica et propositio in concilio Basiliensi a. 1434 atque oratio Sigismundum regem a. 1429 Bratislaviae pronuntiatae*, ed. F. N. Bartoš, Tábor 1949, p. 81: *invictissimus miles et bellator Pragensis...*; F. M. Bartoš, *Petr Payne, diplomat husitské revoluce*, Praha 1956; J. Macek, *Die Versammlung von Pressburg, 1429, Folia diplomatica*, vol. 1, Brno 1971, p. 199.

<sup>94</sup> *Výbor*, ed. B. Havránek, vol. II, Praha 1964. A complete text of *Sobieslav Laws* in: *Die sogenannten Sobieslaw'schen Rechte. Ein Prager Stadtrechtsbuch aus dem 15 Jhr.*, ed. R. Schranil, München-Leipzig 1916.

for tradition dating back some hundred years. This proposal was made by Paweł Źidek in his *Jiří správozna* which is a collection of practical advice intended for George of Poděbrady, the Hussite ruler, and one of the numerous works known as “prince’s mirror”. Źidek wrote: “... There is no other more suitable seat for an imperial town than Prague, although Mainz could be equal to imperial might and a great number of residents, and is located near to those who choose the emperor: there is also Nürnberg and Regensburg but Prague is the most appropriate”<sup>95</sup>. This argument is supplemented in another fragment of the reflections by the statement: “Prague is a strong town capable of carrying the burden of all dignity, even imperial...”<sup>96</sup>.

Prague, which, as we have mentioned at the outset of our reflections, in the pre-Hussite period was one of the largest European towns, in the fifteenth century succumbed, not surprisingly, to stagnation and even slight demographic regress. At the turn of the fourteenth century, the number of its residents could be estimated at 30–40,000 but in 1429 it totalled 28,000 and at the beginning of the sixteenth century — about 25,000<sup>97</sup>. The area of the municipality also did not grow. Despite the efforts made by George of Poděbrady, not until the reign of Ladislas Jagellon (1471–1516) Prague experienced a certain surge of vitality<sup>98</sup> which is confirmed i. a. by the revival of international trade routes, severed during the Hussite revolution; especially important was the reestablishment of contacts with extremely powerful Nürnberg<sup>99</sup>.

The literary and propaganda image of Prague proposed by the writings from the Hussite period is distinct for its unusual intensity of hues. František Graus noticed<sup>100</sup> that the composite leadership programme which Prague accepted in political, economic and literary-ideological domains was never completed due to a combination of various reasons. Let us ask a different question: did this programme have any chances to be realized in any one of those domains? One way or another, Prague remains a town which had formulated a theoretical model of a capital that dominates over the country, and which harboured such enormous aspirations to play the leading role that

<sup>95</sup> M. Pavla *Židka Správozna*, ed. Z. V. Tabolka, Historický Archiv České Akademie Věd a Umění nr 33, Praha 1908, p. 159.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 161.

<sup>97</sup> J. Janáček, *Dzieje Pragi (The History of Prague)*, Warszawa 1977, p. 135 sqq.

<sup>98</sup> See: F. Machilek, *Praga*, p. 99.

<sup>99</sup> H. Sturm, *Eger, Nurnberg und Prag. Die Grundlagen ihrer Wechselbeziehungen im hohen und späten Mittelalter*, «Bohemia Jahrbuch», vol. VI, 1965, p. 72–92; H. Schenk, *Nürnberg und Prag. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Handelsbeziehungen im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert*, Giessen 1969; *idem*, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Nürnberg und Prag von 1450–1500 in: Die Aussenhandel Ostmitteleuropas 1450–1650*, ed. I. Bog, Köln-Wien 1971, p. 185–203.

<sup>100</sup> F. Graus, *Prag*, p. 46.

it would be difficult to discover an analogy in other European towns of the Late Middle Ages<sup>101</sup>.

(Translated by Aleksandra Rodzińska-Chojnowska)

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<sup>101</sup> The problem of the capital in the Middle Ages is presented in: L. Oleschki, *Der ideale Mittelpunkt Frankreichs im Mittelalter in Wirklichkeit und Dichtung*, Heidelberg 1913; T. F. Tout, *The Beginnings of a Modern Capital. London and Westminster in the Fourteenth Century*, in: «Proceedings of the British Academy», vol. X, 1921/23, p. 487–511; Das Hauptstadtproblem in der Geschichte. Festgabe zum 90. Geburtstag Friedrich Meineckes, Tübingen 1952; G. Roloff, *Hauptstadt und Staat in Frankreich*, in: «Jahrbucher für Geschichte des deutschen Ostens», nr 1, 1952, p. 249–265; R. Mousnier, *Paris, capital politique au moyen âge et dans les temps modernes*, in: *Paris. Fonctions d'une capitale*, Paris 1962, p. 39–80; F. Rauhut, *Warum wurde Paris die Hauptstadt Frankreichs?*, in: *Medium aevum Romanicum. Festschrift für H. Rheinfelder*, München 1963, p. 267–286; G. A. Williams, *Medieval London, From Commune to Capital*, University of London, Historical Studies nr 11, London 1963; Y. Barel, *La ville médiévale. Système social, système urbain*, Grenoble 1975; *Hauptstädte, Entstehung, Struktur und Funktion*. Referate des 3. Interdisziplinären Colloquiums des Zentralinstituts für fränkische Landeskunde und allgemeine Regionalforschung an der Universität Erlangen–Nürnberg, ed. A. Wendehorst, J. Schneider, Neustadt a. d. Aisch 1979; M. Mitterauer, *Markt und Stadt im Mittelalter. Beiträge zur historischen Zentralitätsforschung*, Stuttgart 1980; E. Ennen *Funktions- und Bedeutungswandel der "Hauptstadt" vom Mittelalter zur Moderne*, collection of lectures with no date or place of publication.