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From Medieval Multinational Empire  
to Early Modern Nation States  
(Holy Roman Empire and Central Europe during  
the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries)

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**PETR VOREL: From Medieval Multinational Empire to Early Modern Nation States (Holy Roman Empire and Central Europe during the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

The emergence of nation states in Europe is associated in contemporary historiography with the French Revolution and the development of national movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The author draws attention to an earlier phase of the formation of nation states, which was related to the power-political crisis of the Holy Roman Empire in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The medieval Empire crossed the boundaries of three major language groups that were mutually unintelligible (Germanic, Romance and Slavic languages). At the time of the creation of the Estates' monarchies at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the question of linguistic identity became an important state-forming element.

**Keywords:** Middle Ages – Holy Roman Empire – Early Modern Era – nation state – Central Europe – Roman-German Empire – national languages

The formation of nation states has had fundamental influence on the historical development of Europe since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is very topical even today. Based on the definition of national identity, the process of integration and disintegration of state units has been and still is taking place, and instrumentally defined national interests have often become the formal reason for the emergence of war conflicts in history. I am talking mainly about Europe, because in the case of the other continents, the formation of states and the boundary delimitation was, in the vast majority of cases, carried out in a different way and was largely influenced by the interests of a few colonial powers. Nevertheless, I believe that the question of the gradual development of nation states in European history may also be of interest to historians from other continents, as it can serve as a useful parallel when comparing similar processes that only have a temporally shifted dynamic.

To historians working on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century modern history, the term “Early Modern Nation State” may sound like an oxymoron.<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, well known that the question of tribal, ethnic or national identity has continuously appeared in historical sources since antiquity and can also be found in Old Testament texts. However, the origins of the basic principles on the basis of which modern European nation states were later formed, can rightly be traced back to the French Revolution, whether the state-building processes were integrative, as in the case of Germany, Italy or Poland, or disintegrative, as in the case of the Habsburg Monarchy, Tsarist Russia or the European part of the Ottoman Empire. Within this conception, the earlier stages of development are seen only as the historical legacy of the past or the ethnic roots of the national emancipation movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

This is true, but one cannot ignore the significant phase of European nation state formation in the early modern period. At that time, the processes taking place had a different dynamic, and from a state-building point of view, the term nation

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1 Theodor SCHIEDER, *Nationalismus und Nationalstaat: Studien zum nationalen Problem in modernen Europa*, Göttingen 1991; Eric J. HOBSBAWM, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge 1992.

2 Anthony D. SMITH, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, London 1986; Miroslav HROCH, *European Nations (Explaining their Formation)*, New York 2015, pp. 39–76; Jenő SZÜCS, “Nationality” and “National Consciousness” in the Middle Ages: Towards the Development of a Common Conceptual Language, in: J. Szücs, *The Historical Construction of National Consciousness – Selected Writings* (eds. G. Klaniczay – B. Trencsényi – G. Gyáni), Budapest – Vienna – New York 2022, pp. 25–86.

was used in a slightly different sense than in revolutionary France, but the developmental continuity is obvious.

The main goal of my paper is therefore to highlight the early modern phase of the formation of European nation states from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards and to define the main principles that distinguished it from a similar process that began three centuries later. It is a conceptual material that attempts to introduce a new element into the interpretation of the history of the early modern period that has not been used in historiography so far, but I am aware that these are preliminary formulations, intended for scholarly discussion.

The area on which I will try to present this phenomenon is, for several reasons, the late medieval supranational entity called the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> Within the framework of this paper, I cannot, of course, deal with the history of the empire in detail. Only for historians from other cultural areas, for whose research the medieval history of Europe is not important, I will allow myself to provide a more general brief description:

The existence of the Holy Roman Empire is absolutely fundamental to European medieval history: From the early Middle Ages onwards, its internal link was Christianisation as a convenient pretext for long-term territorial expansion, including the Crusades to Palestine. Its internal contradiction was the never-ending struggle between the empire and the papacy, since neither side could permanently convince its opponent through their means of power whether the supreme sovereignty lay in secular (the emperor) or ecclesiastical (the pope) power.

Both of these supreme positions of rulership, ecclesiastical and secular, were not hereditary but elected. The political and military struggle for their conquest and their mutual rivalry (the so-called Investiture Controversy) was a permanent part of European medieval history.

The Holy Roman Empire peaked in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, when the king of Bohemia, Charles of Luxembourg (1346–1378), militarily defended his position as the elected ruler of the empire against his opponent. After many decades, he was the first powerful and economically strong ruler to successfully implement a major conceptual reform and stabilise the empire. He had extremely suitable conditions for this: As the king of Bohemia, he was very wealthy, because the Kingdom of

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3 James BRYCE, *The Holy Roman Empire*, New York 1966; Friedrich HEER, *The Holy Roman Empire*, London 2003; *Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation 962 bis 1806*, Vol. I. (962–1495), Berlin 2006; Francis RAPP, *Svatá říše římská národa německého od Oty Velikého po Karla V*, Praha – Litomyšl 2007.

Bohemia was the most important European silver mining area at the time. Thus, unlike his predecessors on the imperial throne, Charles IV had significant economic resources of his own to pursue his political interests.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the lands of the Bohemian Crown that he ruled were not at all affected by the plague epidemic of 1348–1350, which was a major advantage for Charles IV in terms of military potential. He had plenty of soldiers at his disposal and enough money to pay them.

The period of his reign, on the one hand, coincided with the period of conjunctural economic recovery of the empire after the plague, and on the other hand, there were still some territories where the expansion potential of the empire could be directed, namely Lithuania and the Baltics, where the process of Christianisation had not yet been completed and where the possibility of acquiring new territories was possible for the imperial feudalism. The main instrument of imperial expansion at the time was the Teutonic Order. However, secular rulers also organized frequent military campaigns of their own in the region of north-eastern Europe as a part of the papal crusades. In his memoirs, Charles IV recalls fondly how in his youth, he would participate in military campaigns “against the pagans” in Lithuania.<sup>5</sup> Charles’ other two advantages were his friendly relations with the French royal court (where he himself grew up) and, for a relatively long time, his very good personal relations with the Avignon Papacy, beginning with Pope Clement VI.

An important milestone in Charles’ reform of the empire was the year 1356, when he promulgated the Golden Bull,<sup>6</sup> which remained the underlying imperial law, maintaining its formal validity until the dissolution of the early modern Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in 1806. There were many changes brought about by this imperial reform. It was not just a precise procedure for electing a new emperor by votes of seven prince-electors. For the first time, the political boundaries of the empire were defined and its territory organised into imperial regions for taxation purposes. This was important on the western edge (facing France) and in

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4 Hermann CONRAD, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, Band I, Frühzeit und Mittelalter, Karlsruhe 1962, p. 192.

5 Stephen C. ROWELL, *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire within East-Central Europe, 1295–1345*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994; now published in Polish: Stephen C. ROWELL, *Pogańskie Imperium: Litewska dominacja w Europie środkowo-wschodniej 1295–1345*, Oświęcim 2017, here see pp. 269–290.

6 Herbert GRUNDMANN, *Die Goldene Bulle von 1356*, in: B. Gebhardt, *Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte*, Band 1. Frühzeit und Mittelalter, Stuttgart 1960, § 179, pp. 462–465; Ulrike HOHENSEE et al. (eds.), *Die Goldene Bulle (Politik – Wahrnehmung – Rezeption)*, 1–2, Berlin 2009.

the south, where, during Charles' time, the Papal States were delimited upon agreement with the Pope. France and the Papal States were no longer a direct part of the empire ruled by Charles IV.

Charles IV also had the great advantage of the then Luxembourg states being spread out. At its core was the Kingdom of Bohemia with its so-called secondary lands, which Charles IV systematically expanded, especially to the north.<sup>7</sup> The Bohemian lands (in 1378 Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Lusatia and Brandeburg) were connected to the ancestral states of the Luxembourg family (Luxembourg and Brabant)<sup>8</sup> on the western edge of the empire by a strip of small territorial units, called "Bohemian fiefs in the empire"<sup>9</sup>

It is therefore logical that Charles IV made Prague the Imperial seat and built there his own representative Bohemian royal residence. Prague thus became the first permanent imperial residence in history, because in previous centuries the imperial administration had functioned differently and the imperial court had moved around the empire.<sup>10</sup> He also had a new castle, Karlštejn, built in Bohemia for the imperial crown jewels. The central residential function of Prague was

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- 7 Kamil KROFTA, *Bohemia in the Fourteenth Century*, in: Charles William Previt -Orton – Zachary Nugent Brooke (eds.), *Decline of Empire and Papacy*, Cambridge medieval History, Volume VII, Cambridge 1932, pp. 155–182; Joachim BAHLCKE, *Corona, corpus, constitution, confederation (Verfassungsideen und Politikmodelle im sp tmittelalterlich-fr hneuzeitlichen B hmen)*, Mitteilungen des Instituts f r  sterreichische Geschichtsforschung 113, 2005, pp. 90–107; Lenka BOBKOV, *Die Corona Regni Bohemiae und die Integration Mitteleuropas im politischen Konzept Karls IV.*, in: Daniela Břizov – Jiř Kuthan – Jana Peroutkov – Stefan Scholz (eds.), *Kaiser Karl IV. – Die b hmischen Lnder und Europa*, Praha 2017, pp. 88–102.
  - 8 Peter H. WILSON, *Heart of Europe – A History of the Holy Roman Empire*, Cambridge – Massachusetts 2016, Map 6: From Little Kings to Big dynasties: the Empire in 1378.
  - 9 Franz HAIMERL, *Die deutsche Lehenhauptschaft (Lebensbranne) in B hmen – Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Lehenwesens in B hmen mit urkundlichen Beilagen*, Praha 1848; Lenka BOBKOV – Jana HANOUSKOV, *Die B hmischen Lehen in Mitteleuropa und die Erneuerung der B hmischen Krone durch Georg von Podiebrad im Lichte der Vertrge von Eger*, in: Andre Thieme – Uwe Tresp – Birgit Finger (eds.), *Eger 1459. F rstentreffen zwischen Sachsen, B hmen und ihren Nachbarn: Dynastische politik, f rstliche Reprsentation und kulturelle Verflechtung, Saxonia – Schriften des Vereins f r schsische Landesgeschichte e. V., Band 13*, Wettin-L bej n 2011, pp. 241–262.
  - 10 Peter MORAW, *The Court of the German Kings and of the Emperor at the end of the Middle Ages*, in: Ronald G. Asch – Adolf M. Birke (eds.), *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility (The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450–1650)*, Oxford 1991, pp. 103–137, here p. 112; Lothar H BELT, *Von W rmz bis M nster (Reich und  sterreich im Zeitalter der habsburgischen Hegemonie, der Glaubensspaltung und der T rkengefahr)*, in: Wilhelm Brauner – Lothar H belt (eds.), *Sacrum Imperium – Das Reich und  sterreich*, Wien – M nchen – Berlin 1996, pp. 131–161; here p. 134.

strengthened by the foundation of the New Town of Prague,<sup>11</sup> the elevation of the Prague bishopric to an archbishopric<sup>12</sup> and the establishment of Charles University. The latter evidently was not constituted as “the first German University north of the Alps”, but this senseless thesis, originated in the times of the German nationalist historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, comes out up to the present day.<sup>13</sup> The Charles University became the first university to provide education to all the nations that then constituted the Holy Roman Empire north of the Alps. However, in a university context, the term “nation” was traditionally used to refer to a geography, not nationality or language.<sup>14</sup>

What is more important for the topic of this paper is the way in which Charles IV himself perceived nation and native language within an empire the form of which he himself could actively shape. Historians still argue whether Charles IV was more German, French or Czech. He devoted considerable attention to this in his biography, so it is clear that he thought about it.

In his time, the Holy Roman Empire was a territory through which crossed the boundaries of the three major language groups that to this day constitute the main living languages within Europe. These were Romance, Germanic and Slavic languages. Even though they are related Indo-European languages, they developed differently over the centuries, and by the late Middle Ages, they were already mutually unintelligible in common speech. Within the Holy Roman Empire, there were significant distinct linguistic barriers between Germanic and Romance, Germanic and Slavic and, to a small extent in the south of the empire, between Romance and Slavic. These linguistic barriers changed over the centuries.

Due to the significant linguistic differences, however, there was no emergence of transitional language areas (where a mixed form of a new language, e.g. Germanic-Slavic, would emerge as the language of permanent common communication). Bilingualism and gradual natural or forced linguistic-cultural overlap were common at the interface between languages. The result was the apparent domi-

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11 Jiří KUTHAN, *Praga jako sídelní město vládařů Svaté říše římské* (Prague as the seat of the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire), in: Eva Doležalová – Robert Šimůnek – Dana Dvořáčková – Aleš Pořízka (red.), *Od knížat ke králům* (Sborník u příležitosti 60. narozenin Josefa Žemličky), Praha 2007, pp. 309–324.

12 Eduard WINTER, *Frühhumanismus – Seine Entwicklung in Böhmen und deren europäische Bedeutung für die Kirchenreformbestrebungen im 14. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1964.

13 For example Günter NAUMANN, *Deutsche Geschichte (Das Alte Reich 962–1806)*, Wiesbaden 32013, p. 102.

14 Ferdinand SEIBT, *Deutschland und die Tschechen (Geschichte einer Nachbarschaft in der Mitte Europas)*, München – Zürich 1993, pp. 127–128.

nance of only one of the languages,<sup>15</sup> rather than their intermingling in the form of dialects, as is common among closely related languages.

The issue of individual national identity did not play a significant role in Charles IV's mid-14<sup>th</sup> century conception of rulership. The empire had a strong Bohemocentric character during his reign, but this was in no way related to the formation of a nation state. It was merely a strategic decision to ensure the long-term power position of the Luxembourg dynasty within the empire.

Latin remained the common language of politics, culture, the Church and education. Charles IV was well aware of the importance of national languages and the linguistic diversity of the empire, especially at the level of the noble power elites. In this social stratum, the question of national belonging was an important layer of individual identification throughout medieval Europe. Every nobleman knew whether he was French or English, even if he fought as a mercenary for the other side.

In large areas in the north-east of the empire (for example in Saxony and Brandenburg), there was still a substantial Slavic population,<sup>16</sup> but the ruling nobility identified themselves as linguistically Germanic, using one of the German dialects as their mother tongue. This was a major difference from the Bohemian lands. These were also linguistically mixed at the time, with a substantial German population. In the case of the Bohemian lands, however, the domestic nobility, who identified themselves as Czech or Moravian, i.e. Slavic, retained a decisive position in the country's power structure.<sup>17</sup> The emperor was significantly dependent on the Czech and Moravian aristocracy, as these lands formed the basis of his own economic and military power. And the emperor also made Prague the Imperial seat, which soon began to be reflected in long-distance transit trade and the influx of financial resources.

These circumstances were taken into account by Charles IV directly in one of the parts of the Golden Bull of 1356. This basic imperial law orders the secular prince-electors to provide their sons with linguistic education to such an extent

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15 Robert B. PYNSENT, *Czech Nationalism after Dalimil and before Huss*, in: Eva Doležalová – Jaroslav Pánek (eds.), *Confession and Nation in the Era of Reformations (Central Europe in Comparative Perspective)*, Prague 2011, pp. 9–34.

16 Nicholas OSTLER, *Empires of the Word (A Language History of the World)*, London – New York – Toronto – Sydney 2006, p. 320.

17 John KLASSEN, *Hus, the Hussites and Bohemia*, in: Christopher ALLMAND (red.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Volume VII (c. 1415 – c 1500), Cambridge 1998, pp. 367–391, here pp. 367–368.

that they would be able to communicate in the three distinct main languages of the empire: German, Italian and Slavic. This is not a new discovery, this topic was recently very pregnant summarized by Peter Wilson in his comprehensive history of the empire.<sup>18</sup>

For a number of years, this part of the imperial law was actually implemented. We know that the sons of the East German prince-electors were sent to the imperial court in Prague to learn the Slavic language<sup>19</sup> as early as the reign of Charles' son Wenceslaus IV at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the aforementioned "lingua slavorum" is usually interpreted as Czech, even though all of the West Slavic languages were yet to establish a standard form at that time. They were considered the same language, mutually intelligible without interpreters, whether its user came from south Bohemia, Polish Cracow or from the county of Trenčín in Upper Hungary in the territory of today's Slovakia. This linguistic affinity is still evident today. Even after seven centuries since the birth of Charles IV, the main West Slavic languages (Czech, Polish and Slovak) are still mutually intelligible and are closer to each other linguistically than the numerous regional and local dialects of contemporary German or Italian, which for various reasons never developed into standard written languages.<sup>20</sup> There was, of course, no common standard form of the language in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, even in the case of German and Italian, and the linguistic diversity of the German and Italian dialects was certainly recognised by the emperor during his numerous stays in Germany and northern Italy.

In the Golden Bull of 1356, the languages of German, Italian and Slavic could not therefore have been understood by the author as any particular standardised language as we know from modern times, but rather as the three large language groups, distinctly different from one another, which were then in use within the

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18 P. H. WILSON, *Heart of Europe*, pp. 255–262, chapter "Of the German Nation", here p. 260.

19 Ivan HLAVÁČEK, *Prag als Aufenthaltsort westeuropäischer geistlicher Fürsten in der Zeit Karls IV.*, in: Winfried Eberhard – Hans Lemberg – Hanz-Dieter Heimann – Robert Luft (Hgg.), *Westmitteleuropa Ostmitteleuropa – Vergleiche und Beziehungen* (Festschrift für Ferdinand Seibt zum 65. Geburtstag), Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum, Band 70, München 1992, pp. 153–163.

20 Rolf BERGMANN, *Deutsche Sprache und römisches Reich im Mittelalter*, in: Bernd Schneidmüller – Stefan Weinfurter (Hrsg.), *Heilig – Römisch – Deutsch* (Das Reich im mittelalterlichen Europa), Internationale Tagung zur 29. Ausstellung des Europarates und Landesausstellung Sachsen-Anhalt: Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation, 962 bis 1806, Dresden 2006; Martin LOWRY, *The Proving Ground: Venetian Academies of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, in: Fredi Chiappelli (ed.), *The Fairest Flower: The Emergence of Linguistic National Consciousness in Renaissance Europe* (International Conference of The Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies University of California, Los Angeles, 12–13 December 1983), Firenze 1985, pp. 43–51.

imperial territory. The specific versions of the regional and local dialects were not considered separate languages, even when the real intelligibility between them was already difficult, which was especially true of the medieval dialects of German.

In the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Holy Roman Empire was purposefully shaped by Charles IV as a supranational entity, encompassing three completely different linguistic areas. He could not have foreseen that linguistic borders would ever become a state-forming element. His reforms had no nationalistically motivated context. Even the emperor's preferences for redirecting financial flows to Bohemia (including money from imperial sources) had no connection to the emperor's possible national identity: It is understandable that he preferred the economic and cultural development of his own countries, where he himself ruled, regardless of which of the three language groups was predominant in that country (Charles IV was fluent in all of them).<sup>21</sup> His language decree, incorporated into the Golden Bull of 1356, had an entirely pragmatic purpose and its purpose was to promote the long-term cohesion of the empire. As in the Middle Ages, Latin remained the main diplomatic language of the empire, and for practical reasons, a variant of medieval German was also commonly used in the imperial office.

However, Charles' idea of the Holy Roman Empire as a supranational Christian monarchy ruled by a wise emperor was much shorter-lived than its creator had anticipated. His Golden Bull of 1356 was still formally in force, but in terms of state law, it was de facto superseded by a new document, the resolution of the Diet of Worms of 1495.<sup>22</sup> This document is an imaginary "birth certificate" of a new state formation, which, although it declared its continuity with the medieval empire, was substantially different in its internal structure. The basic structural change is aptly illustrated by its new extended name: The Holy Roman Empire of the German nation. That is to say, a state formation which added a national definition to its name.

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21 Robert J. W. EVANS, *Language and Politics: Bohemia in International Context, 1409–1627*, in: Eva Doležalová – Jaroslav Pánek (eds.), *Confession and Nation in the Era of Reformations*, Prague 2011, pp. 155–182, here p. 157.

22 Heinz ANGERMEIER, *Der Wormser Reichstag 1495 – ein europäisches Ereignis*, *Historische Zeitschrift* 261, 1995, pp. 739–768; Sabine WEFERS, *Der Wormser Tag von 1495 und die ältere Staatswerdung*, in: Paul-Joachim Heinig – Singrid Jahns – Hans-Joachim Schmidt – Rainer Christoph Schwinges – Sabine Wefers (Hgg.), *Reich, Regionen und Europa im Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Festschrift für Peter Moraw), *Historische Forschungen*, Band 67, Berlin 2000, pp. 287–304. See too: Heinz ANGERMEIER (ed.), *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Maximilian I.*, Bd. 5: Reichstag zu Worms, *Deutsche Reichstagsakten – Mittlere Reihe*, Göttingen 1981.

What actually happened during that century and a half?

At the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, a period of long-term and systemic crisis of the empire began.<sup>23</sup> All the basic elements on which its development had been based during Charles' reign collapsed:

The empire could no longer expand territorially in the north-east. This was prevented by the formation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1385. In the subsequent struggle for dominance in this area, the Teutonic Order suffered a major military defeat at the Battle of Grunwald (1410) and gradually lost its importance.<sup>24</sup>

The crucial diplomatic axis between Avignon (the seat of the pope) and Prague (the seat of the emperor) collapsed, and the prolonged papal schism also destabilised the ecclesiastical structures.

The new ruler of the empire, Charles IV's son Wenceslaus IV, did not have the extensive financial resources of his father. The Luxembourg family domain was divided between Charles IV's sons and nephews, and Wenceslaus IV directly ruled only in Bohemia. These resources were not enough to finance more generous policies, and the ruler of the empire had to resort to the long-accumulated wealth of the Catholic Church in order to fulfil his financial obligations. This was also one of the reasons why the ideas of English reformer John Wickliffe,<sup>25</sup> which later became the basis of the Hussite Reformation in Bohemia, met a lively response at the Prague royal court.<sup>26</sup>

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23 Petr VOREL, *Conditions for Integration of Central Europe at the End of the Middle Ages (1356–1495)*, Comenius – Journal of Euro-American Civilization 4, 2017, pp. 173–196.

24 Wiesław SIERADZAN, *Książę słupski Bogusław VIII (1364–1418) a konflikt polsko-litewsko-mazowiecko-krzyżacki w latach 1411–1414 w świetle najnowszych badań*, in: Jan Gancewski (red.), *Krajobraz grunwaldzki w dziejach polsko-krzyżackich i polsko-niemieckich na przestrzeni wieków. Wokół mitów i rzeczywistości*, Olsztyn 2009, pp. 209–224; Stephan FLEMMING, *Zwischen dem Reich und Ostmitteleuropa – Die Bezeichnungen von Jagiellonen, Wettiner und dem Deutschen Orden (1386–1526)*, Leipzig – Stuttgart 2019.

25 Alfred THOMAS, *A Blessed Shore – England and Bohemia from Chaucer to Shakespeare*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca – London 2007, Chap. 1: *Imitatio Mariae – Anne of Bohemia as Cultural and Religious Mediatrix*, pp. 18–64.

26 Kamil KROFTA, *John Hus*, in: C. W. Previté-Orton – Z. N. Brooke (red.), *The Close of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge medieval History, Volume VIII, Cambridge 1936, pp. 45–64; Zdeněk V. DAVID, *Finding the Middle Way (The Utraquists' Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther)*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore – London 2003, pp. 21–26; Peter HILSCH, *Jan Hus (Ein Reformator als Bedrohung von Reich und Kirche?)*, in: Franz Machilek (Hg.), *Die Hussitische Revolution (Religiöse, politische und regionale Aspekte)*, Köln – Weimar – Wien 2012, pp. 25–37.

The Holy Roman Empire, which had lost its developmental momentum, began to systematically collapse because of internal disputes. There was no force that would be capable of effectively dealing with the papal schism, the split in imperial power (Wenceslaus IV refused to recognize his dethronement in 1400), and the rapidly spreading reform movement in Bohemia, the former main centre of the empire. This set a very dangerous precedent for the Catholic Church: If the ruler of the empire himself (King Wenceslaus of Bohemia) considered the property of the church to be his own, why couldn't other imperial princes do the same? Really; in the German lands, the same process was proven to be functional a hundred years later during the Lutheran Reformation.<sup>27</sup>

The long-term crisis of the empire resulted in an internal war. The military potential, previously used for expansion, turned inwards from the 1420s, against its original centre of power in Bohemia.<sup>28</sup> This was declared the source of a dangerous heresy that should be destroyed by a crusade.<sup>29</sup> The long successful defence of the Bohemian lands in the confrontation with the imperial army also had its national aspect, which was easily asserted thanks to the clear linguistic difference: The simplistic view "everyone who speaks Czech is a heretic" on the German side, and the spreading religious chiliasm (the Czech nation as a community chosen to repair the Catholic Church) on the Czech one.<sup>30</sup> However, even these fifteen years of religious wars within the empire did not bring about a change in Charles' original Bohemocentric conception of the empire. Emperor Sigismund desperately sought military control of the Bohemian lands precisely so that he could preserve the original medieval power model, regardless of how the compromise negotiations for a religious exemption for the Bohemian lands within the Catholic Church (the so-called Ba-

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27 Christofer OCKER, *Church Robbers and Reformers in Germany 1525–1547 (Confiscation and Religious Purpose in the Holy Roman Empire)*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions (History, Culture, Religion, Ideas), Volume CXIV, Leiden – Boston 2006; Petr VOREL, *The War of the Princes: The Bohemian Lands and the Holy Roman Empire 1546–1555*, Helena History Press LLC, Santa Helena – California (USA) 2015.

28 František ŠMAHEL, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, Stuttgart 2002; Bd. III, pp. 1819–1865.

29 Richard KIECKHEFER, *Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany*, Philadelphia 1979, pp. 83–98; Norman HOULEY, *The Later Crusades from Lyons to Alcazar 1274–1580*, Oxford 1995, pp. 249–259; Peter HILSCH, *Die Hussitenkriege als spätmittelalterlicher Ketzerkrieg*, in: Franz Brendle – Anton Schindling (Hgg.), *Religionskriege im Alten Reich und in Alteuropa*, Aschendorfer<sup>2</sup> 2010, pp. 59–69.

30 František ŠMAHEL, *The Divided Nation*, in: James R. Palmitessa (ed.), *Between Lipany and White Mountain (Essays in Late Medieval and Early Modern Bohemian History in Modern Czech Scholarship)*, Leiden – Boston 2014, s. 63–93.

sel Compacts)<sup>31</sup> eventually developed.<sup>32</sup> In the end, neither Sigismund's reign after the end of the Bohemian wars nor the short reign of his son-in-law and successor, Albert of Habsburg, ultimately brought about any substantial change in the structure of the empire.<sup>33</sup> Albert's son Ladislaus, called the Posthumous, became the hope for the restoration of the medieval form of the empire. Although he managed to take his place as ruler of Bohemia, Hungary and Austria, which represented a sufficient background for potential imperial power, he did not live long enough to be able to claim the imperial throne, as was generally expected.

The ruler of the empire thus remained Frederick III,<sup>34</sup> who himself did not have sufficient economic resources to rule the empire in the long term. His reign was a period of de facto disintegration of the imperial structures at all levels. The original Luxembourg concept of an empire with a permanent economic and power centre in Bohemia was no longer acceptable to the imperial princes, even though the newly elected local Bohemian king, George of Poděbrady,<sup>35</sup> had ambitions to influence the politics of the entire empire.<sup>36</sup>

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31 František ŠMAHEL, *Pax externa et interna – Vom Heiligen Krieg zur erzwungenen Toleranz im hussitischen Böhmen (1419–1485)*, in: Alexander Patschkowsky – Harald Zimmermann (Hgg.), *Toleranz im Mittelalter, Vorträge und Forschungen des Konstanzer Arbeitskreises für mittelalterliche Geschichte* 45, 1998, pp. 221–273.

32 Kamil KROFTA, *Bohemia in the Fifteenth Century*, in: C. W. Previté-Orton – Z. N. Brooke (red.), *The Close of the Middle Ages, Cambridge medieval History, Volume VIII*, Cambridge 1936, pp. 65–155; Winfried EBERHARD, *Der Weg zur Koexistenz (Kaiser Sigmund und das Ende der hussitischen Revolution)*, *Bohemia* 33, 1992, pp. 1–43.

33 Karl ZEUMER (ed.), *Quellensammlung zur Geschichte der Deutschen Reichsverfassung im Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Erster Teil (Von Otto II. bis Friedrich III.), Tübingen 1913, Nr. 167, pp. 265–266; Günter HÖDL, *Albrecht II. – Königtum, Reichsregierung und Reichsreform 1438–1439*, Wien 1978; Heinz ANGERMAIER, *Die Reichsreform 1410–1555 (Die Staatsproblematik in Deutschland zwischen Mittelalter und Gegenwart)*, München 1984, pp. 63–70; Karl Friedrich KRIEGER, *König, Reich und Reichsreform im Spätmittelalter*, München 1992.

34 Ivan HLAVÁČEK, *Beiträge zur Erforschung der Beziehungen Friedrich III. zu Böhmen bis zum Tode Georgs von Podiebrad († 1471)*, in: Paul-Joachim Heinig (Hg.), *Kaiser Friedrich III. (1440–1493) in seiner Zeit (Studien anlässlich des 500. Todestages am 19. August 1493/1993)*, *Forschungen zur Kaiser- und Papstgeschichte des Mittelalters – Beihefte zu J. F. Böhmer, Regesta Imperii* 12, Köln – Weimar – Wien 1993, pp. 279–298.

35 Otakar ODLOŽILÍK, *The Hussite King – Bohemia in European Affairs 1440–1471*, New Brunswick 1965.

36 Robert George Dalrymple LAFFAN, *The Empire in the Fifteenth Century*, in: C. W. PREVITÉ-ORTON – Z. N. BROOKE (red.), *The Close of the Middle Ages, Cambridge medieval History, Volume VIII*, Cambridge 1936, pp. 116–157 (here p. 146); F. G. HEYMANN, *International Relations in Mid-fifteenth Century Europe and Their Significance for the Peace Plan of King George*, in: *Cultus Pacis – Études et Documents du „Symposium Pragense Cultus Pacis 1464–1964“*

However, the fundamental impetus for the reform of the empire came not from the imperial princes or from Bohemia, but from neighbouring Hungary. After the death of Ladislaus the Posthumous, the domestic magnate Matthias Corvinus became ruler of the then still vast Hungarian state as the elected King of Hungary. Corvinus did not hide his ambitions for power as well and sought to win the imperial crown.<sup>37</sup> In the long-lasting war with Emperor Frederick III, he was clearly victorious and gradually occupied the Habsburg hereditary lands in the Danube region, including the seat of Vienna.<sup>38</sup> There was no force in the empire capable of facing Corvinus. Corvinus concluded compromise peace agreements with the Bohemian King Vladislaus II.<sup>39</sup> Many of the imperial princes, who had unresolved older disputes with the Habsburgs, watched with interest as the emperor lost battle after battle and gradually lost his territories, but had no reason to help the emperor in *his* war.

The danger of Corvinus' ascension to the imperial throne in the event of Frederick III's death should have been prevented by the timely election of his successor, who was to become his son Maximilian.<sup>40</sup> It was then (1485–1486), at the time of the organization of a new tax system to finance the imperial army to defend against Corvinus,<sup>41</sup> that the idea of transforming the once vast medieval empire

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(Commemoratorio Pacis Generalis ante quingentos annos a Georgio Bohemiae rege prepositae), Praha 1966, pp. 83–96.

- 37 Wilhelm FRANKÓI, *König Matthias Corvinus und der deutsche Kaiserthron*, Ungarische Rundschau für historische und soziale Wissenschaften 4, 1915, pp. 1–27; Jörg K. HOENSCH, *Matthias Corvinus (Diplomat, Feldherr und Mäzen)*, Graz – Wien – Köln 1998, pp. 161–198.
- 38 Gyula RÁZSÓ, *Die Feldzüge des Königs Matthias Corvinus in Niederösterreich 1477–1490*, Militärgeschichtliche Schriftenreihe, Heft 24, Wien 1973; Ferdinand OPPL – Richard PERGER (eds.), *Kaiser Friedrich III. und die Wiener 1483–1485 (Briefe und Ereignisse während der Belagerung Wiens durch König Matthias Corvinus von Ungarn)*, Wien 1993.
- 39 Antonín KALOUS, *Matyáš Korvín (1443–1490) – uherský a český král*, České Budějovice 2009, pp. 179–185.
- 40 Heinrich ULMANN, *Die Wahl Maximilians I.*, Forschungen zur Deutschen Geschichte 22, 1882, pp. 131–158; Adolf BACHMAN, *Zur deutschen Königswahl Maximilians I.*, Archiv für österreichische Geschichte 76, 1890, pp. 557–605; Hermann WIESFLECKER, *Österreich im Zeitalter Maximilians I.*, Wien – München 1999, pp. 343–344; Susanne WOLF, *Die Doppelregierung Kaiser Friedrichs III. und König Maximilians (1486–1493)*, Forschungen zur Kaiser- und Papstgeschichte des Mittelalters – Beihefte zu J. F. Böhmer, Regesta Imperii, 25, Köln – Weimar – Wien 2005, pp. 129–136.
- 41 Peter MORAW, *Der "Gemeine Pfennig" (Neue Steuern und die Einheit des Reiches im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert)*, in: Uwe Schultz (Hg.), *Mit den Zehnten fing es an (Eine Kulturgeschichte der Steuer)*, München 1986, pp. 130–142; Reinhard HEYDENREUTER, *Der Steuerbetrug und seine Bestrafung in den deutschen Territorien der frühen Neuzeit*, in: Lingelbach Gernhard (Hg.),

into a German nation state came to the fore. The wealthy imperial princes and towns were willing to financially support the defence against Corvinus, but only on the condition that the empire would be reconstituted as a state formation of the Estates type, in which the newly established Imperial Diet and other Estates institutions would form an effective counterbalance to imperial power.

The territorial scope of the Holy Roman Empire, established under new conditions at the first Imperial Diet of Worms in 1495, was clearly defined in the creation of a new tax register:<sup>42</sup> Only those who are willing to pay the new imperial tax will be part of the Holy Roman Empire, will be represented in the Imperial Diet, and will enjoy military and legal protection of the newly established institutions (Imperial Government, Imperial Chamber Court).<sup>43</sup> Belonging to the new state was defined by positive selection (i.e. the willingness to pay taxes for the common Imperial defence) and therefore it was not a politically conflicting process in principle.<sup>44</sup> The only major political problem at this stage of the internal consolidation of the Empire was the status of Switzerland. Both the Sovereign and the Imperial Estates wanted its belonging to the German Empire, but the Swiss refused to pay the regular tax imposed on them by the new Imperial tax system. The military solution that Maximilian I attempted in 1499 was in favour of the Swiss alliance, which defended its independence from the Empire.<sup>45</sup>

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Staatsfinanzen – Staatsverschuldung – Staatsbankrotte in der europäischen Staaten- und Rechtsgeschichte, Köln – Weimar – Wien 2000, pp. 167–183.

- 42 P. VOREL, *Conditions for the Integration of Central Europe*, p. 189, map “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation – Real Political Borders defined by the Tax System and by constitution of the Imperial Circles at beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century”.
- 43 Fritz HARTUNG, *Die Reichsreform von 1485 bis 1495 (Ihr Verlauf und ihr Wesen)*, Historische Vierteljahrschrift 16, 1913, pp. 24–53, 181–209; Erich MOLITOR, *Die Reichsreformbestrebungen des 15. Jahrhunderts bis zum Tode Kaiser Friedrichs III.*, Untersuchungen zur Deutschen Staats- und Rechtsgeschichte, 132. Heft, Breslau 1921; Karl Siegfried BADER, *Kaiserliche und ständische Reformdanken in der Reichsreform des endenden 15. Jahrhunderts*, Historisches Jahrbuch im Auftrage der Görres-Gesellschaft 73, 1953 (München – Freiburg 1954), pp. 74–94; Friedrich J. BATTENBERG, *Die Ordnung des Königlichen Kammergerichts 1495*, in: Der Wormser Reichstag von 1495, Quellen und Abh. zur Mittelrheinischen Kirchengeschichte, Koblenz 1997.
- 44 Winfried DOTZAUER, *Die deutschen Reichskreise in der Verfassung des Alten Reiches und ihr Eigenleben (1500–1806)*, Darmstadt 1989, pp. 13–47; Georg SCHMIDT, *Geschichte des Alten Reiches (Staat und Nation on der Frühen Neuzeit 1495–1806)*, München 1999, pp. 38–40.
- 45 Willy ANDREAS, *Deutschland vor der Reformation (Eine Zeitenwende)*, Stuttgart 1959, pp. 206–208; Paul-Joachim HEINIG, *Friedrich III., Maximilian I. und die Eidgenossen*, in: Peter Rück – Heinrich Koller (eds.), *Die Eidgenossen und ihre Nachbarn im Deutschen Reich des Mittelalters*, Marburg an der Lahn 1991, s. 267–293.

The Bohemian lands did not become part of the newly conceived Roman-German Empire not only because they were not willing to pay the new imperial tax, but the exclusion of the Bohemian lands from the newly emerging imperial union was also simply justified by the imperial princes on the grounds that the Bohemian king “was not a German”.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the parts of the original Empire of Charles IV did not enter into the newly established Roman-German Empire, in which the Czech (Lands of the Bohemian Crown) or Italian (the whole area of the north-Italian territorial domination) language was used as the language of the ruling layer, as this would undermine the basic idea of Maximilian I’s Imperial reform.<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately, I have to say that the current past and modern syntheses, which are concerned with the history of the late medieval Empire (any, there’s no need to cite specific works) do not take into account the aforementioned circumstances. It’s obvious for example from the historical reconstruction maps, in which the Roman-German Empire is repeatedly displayed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the form as it was consolidated by Charles IV in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>48</sup> It seems as if nothing happened in the history of Central Europe for two centuries.

Compared to the multinational formation of the fief character, which the medieval Holy Roman Empire was from its definition, the early modern Roman-German Empire had a completely different structure.<sup>49</sup> It was a state of a dual char-

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46 Jaroslav PÁNEK, *Bohemia and the Empire: Acceptance and Rejection*, in: Robert J. W. Evans – Peter H. Wilson (eds.), *The Holy Roman Empire 1495–1806 (A European Perspective)*, Brill’s Companions to European History, Volume I, Leiden – Boston 2012, s. 121–142; Petr VOREL, *Státoprávní vyčlenění českých zemí ze Svaté říše římské (Důsledky říšské reformy Maxmiliána I.)*, *Český časopis historický* 111, 2013, pp. 743–804.

47 Michael HUGHES, *Early Modern Germany 1477–1806*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1992, pp. 19–20.

48 Josef ENGEL (ed.), *Grosser historischer Weltatlas*, III. Teil – Neuzeit, München 1962, here Maps “Deutschland zur Zeit Karls V. 1519–1556”; “Die Kreisteilung des Reiches seit dem 16. Jh.” and “Europa im 16. Jh.”, pp. 110–111; Heinrich LUTZ, *Das Ringen um deutsche Einheit und kirchliche Erneuerung (Von Maximilian I. bis zum Westfälischen Frieden 1490 bis 1648)*, Propyläen Geschichte Deutschlands IV., Berlin 1983, Map “Das Reich – Habsburg – Europa 1500–1540”, pp. 16–17; Manfred SCHEUCH, *Historischer Atlas Österreich*, Wien 1994 (5<sup>th</sup> Edition), Map “Reformation in Österreich um 1540”, p. 63; Brendan SIMMS, *Kampf um Vorherrschaft (Eine deutsche Geschichte Europas 1453 bis Heute)*, München 2014, Karte 1: “Europa um 1500”; Peter H. WILSON, *Heart of Europe*, map 7. “The Empire in 1512 (showing the Kriese)” and map 8. “The Empire in 1555”; David CRISWELL, *The Rise and Fall of the Holy Roman Empire (From Charlemagne to Napoleon)*, Dallas 2015, pp. 565–566, map “In the Time of Charles V” etc.

49 P. VOREL, *Conditions for the Integration of Central Europe*, p. 187, table “Main Divergences of the Integration of Central Europe in 1356 and 1495”.

acter, in which the Emperor shared his power with the Estates community, represented by the newly formed Imperial Diet. It was also a state that was clearly defined on the principle of nationality as the German-language state.<sup>50</sup> This corresponds to the introduction of the new name of this state formation in the form of the “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation”, which had never been used before in the time of Charles IV.<sup>51</sup>

The example of Germany provides a good illustration of the basic principles that accompanied the formation of early modern nation states.<sup>52</sup> But similar process took place in most of the original parts of the medieval Holy Roman Empire that did not become part of the early modern Roman-German Empire, which after 1495 no longer included the “Slavic”<sup>53</sup> or “Italian”<sup>54</sup> part (i.e. territories where at

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- 50 Alfred SCHRÖCKER, *Die deutsche Nation (Beobachtungen zur politischen Propaganda des ausgehenden 15. Jahrhunderts)*, Historische Studien, Heft 426, Lübeck 1974; Eberhard ISENMANN, *Kaiser, Reich und deutsche Nation am Ausgang des 15. Jahrhunderts*, in: Joachim Ehlers (Hg.), *Ansätze und Diskontinuität deutscher Nationsbildung im Mittelalter*, Sigmaringen 1989, pp. 145–246; Hans KLOFT, *Die Idee einer deutschen Nation zu Beginn der frühen Neuzeit*, in: Rainer Wiegels – Winfried Woessler (Hrsg.), *Arminius und die Varusschlacht*, Paderborn 1995, s. 197–210.
- 51 Hellmuth RÖSSLER, *Geschichte des europäischen Staatensystems von Maximilian I. bis zum Ende des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, in: *Historia Mundi – Ein Handbuch der Weltgeschichte in zehn Bänden*, VII. Band *Übergang zur Moderne*, Bern 1957, pp. 161–227; Bernd MARQUARD, *Das Römisch-Deutsche Reich als segmentäres Verfassungssystem (1348–1806/48) – Versuch zu einer neuen Verfassungstheorie auf der Grundlage der lokalen Herrschaften*, Zürcher Studien zur Rechtsgeschichte 39, Zürich 1999; Len SCALES, *The Illuminated Reich (Memory, Crisis, and the Visibility of Monarchy in Late Medieval Germany)*, in: Jason Philip Coy – Benjamin Marschke – David Warren Sabean (eds.), *The Holy Roman Empire Reconsidered*, New York – Oxford 2013, pp. 73–92; Joachim WHALEY, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire (Volume I: Maximilian I to the Peace of Westphalia 1493–1648)*, Oxford 2013, pp. 23–49, 288–289.
- 52 Herfried MÜNKLER, *Nation als politische Idee im frühneuzeitlichen Europa*, in: Klaus Garber (ed.), *Nation und Literatur im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit (Akten des I. Internationalen Osnabrücker Kongresses zur Kulturgeschichte der frühen Neuzeit)*, Tübingen 1989, pp. 56–86.
- 53 Jaroslav PÁNEK, *Der böhmische Staat und das Reich in der Frühen Neuzeit*, in: Volker Press (ed.), *Alternativen zur Reichsverfassung in der Frühen Neuzeit?*, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs Kolloquien 23, Osnabrück 1993, pp. 169–178; Petr VOREL, *Die Länder der böhmischen Krone und das Heilige Römische Reich in der Frühen Neuzeit*, in: J. Pešek – P. Vorel (eds.), *Neue tschechische Interpretationen der Fragen des tschechisch-deutschen Zusammenlebens (47. Deutscher Historikertag / Dresden 2008 – Die Vorträge der tschechischen Gastsektion)*, Magdeburg 2011, pp. 21–32.
- 54 Hagen KELLER, *Der Blick von Italien auf das “römische” Imperium und seine “deutschen” Kaiser*, in: Bernd Schneidmüller – Stefan Weinfurter (Hrsg.), *Heilig – Römisch – Deutsch (Das Reich im mittelalterlichen Europa)*, Internationale Tagung zur 29. Ausstellung des Europarates und Landesausstellung Sachsen-Anhalt: Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation, 962 bis 1806, Dresden 2006.

that time one of the dialects of medieval German was not the language of the ruling strata).

At that time we can define the basic principles that accompanied the formation of early modern nation states:

1) The linguistic definition of “nation” was still very broad. Large interrelated language groups are generally considered to have a common language, regardless of specific regional or local dialects. A clear language criterion as a distinguishing feature is only applicable at the interface between mutually distant language groups (German, Roman, Slavic).<sup>55</sup>

2) The share of the nobility in the legislative power, most often in the form of regional diets, is increasing significantly. It is the possibility of estate political representation in the diets (which did not exist in the medieval fiefdom-type monarchies) that significantly accelerates the process of linguistic-national identification of this stratum. There is a rapid “closing of estates”, i.e. a nominal enumeration of the families belonging to a given group in a given country. They are required to have an active knowledge of the national language, without which it is impossible to participate in political life.<sup>56</sup>

3) The medieval universal Latin is rapidly being replaced in political communication by national languages, introduced as the official language of diets, courts and land registers or even the Holy Writ. Differences in dialects within the same language group are not perceived as a problem as long as they are still mutually intelligible. In larger state units, such a situation is solved either by choosing one of the dialects as the main national language, which is understood by native speakers of the same language group (Spain, France),<sup>57</sup> or by trying to adapt the main legal documentation (resolutions of diets, sovereign charters) into an artificial language form, understandable by the majority of users of the entire language group (Germany before the Reformation). The lexical and grammatical stabiliza-

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55 For a good example of such linguistic delineation (Slavic, Germanic and Italian languages) within the ecclesiastical community of the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, see Petr HLAVÁČEK, *National and Linguistic Disputes in the Bohemian Vicariate of the Observant Franciscans*, in: J. R. Palmitessa (ed.), *Between Lipany and White Mountain*, pp. 94–119.

56 Tom SCOTT, *Germany and the Empire*, in: Christopher Allmand (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Volume VII (c. 1415 – c. 1500)*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 337–366 (here pp. 337–338).

57 Helmut KOENIGSBERGER, *Spain*, in: Orest Ranum (ed.), *National Consciousness, History, and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Baltimore – London 1975, pp. 144–172; William F. CHURCH, *France*, *ibidem*, pp. 43–66.

tion of the respective national language (which later usually becomes the basis of the modern standardised language) is significantly accelerated by printing press and the development of literacy. And also thanks to a new literary genre, which became “national history” – i.e. historical treatises that created a picture of common historical development. This is particularly typical of the German environment at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>58</sup>

For a relatively long time, the early modern nation state became the target model of the state system, which found its image in contemporary political science as well. In my opinion, three main sources are important for the study of the development of early modern nation states in Central Europe.

An explicit definition of the Roman-German Empire as a German nation state is contained in the electoral capitulation of Charles V from 1519, which states German as the only internal language of the empire (in addition to traditional medieval Latin):<sup>59</sup> “...For this purpose, no other tongues or languages may be used in written acts of the realm, only the German or Latin...” This text was presented by the German Estates, not by Charles V.<sup>60</sup> A similar process of language delimitation (Romance or Slavic) took place in most of the original parts of the medieval Holy Roman Empire that did not become part of the Roman-German Empire after 1495.

Based on his experience in the German, France and Northern Italian environment, Niccolò Machiavelli wrote his most important piece (*The Prince*) in 1513,<sup>61</sup> in which he appreciates the quality of a linguistically homogeneous state

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58 Leonard KRIEGER, *Germany*, ibidem, pp. 67–97, here pp. 78–82.

59 *Copey der verschreibung so Karolus der König zu Hispanien, gegen den Chur Fürsten vnd an deren Stenden des H[eiliges] Römischen Reichs sich verschriben – Die verschreibung mit dem Aide bestetigt als er zu Römischem Könige erwölet ward Anno. M.D.XIX.*, Strassburg 1546, § XIII Ins Reichs schriftlichen handlungen Teütsch oder Latinisch spraach zu gebrauchen: “...Darzu in schriftlichen Handlungen des Reichs kein andere Zungen noch Spraach gebrauchen lassen, wann die Teütsche oder Latinische zungen...” Modern Edition see Wolfgang BURGDORF (ed.), *Die Wahlkapitulationen der römisch-deutschen Könige und Kaiser 1519–1792*, Quellen zur Geschichte des Heiligen Römischen Reiches, Band 1, Göttingen 2015.

60 R. J. W. EVANS, *Language and Politics*, p. 166; Wolfgang BURGDORF, *Protokonstitutionalismus – Die Reichsverfassung in den Wahlkapitulationen der römisch-deutschen Könige und Kaiser 1519–1792*, Schriftenreihe der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Band 94, Göttingen 2015.

61 Niccolò MACHIAVELLI, *Vladař* (překlad Josef Hajný), Praha 2007, pp. 29–30.

(consisting of one nation from which the ruler himself comes) over a much more difficult-to-govern territory made up of ethnically disparate parts.

The exact contemporary definition of the nation, which no longer applies only to the ruling level, but across all social classes, is formulated by important Moravian nobleman Wilhelm of Pernštejn in 1518. For many years, this man was a member of the provincial government (as the supreme court master of the Kingdom of Bohemia) and influenced as a military leader and later as a diplomat and banker even high European politics. He was personally acquainted with Emperor Frederick III., the Polish Jagiellonians and Matthias Corvinus. Wilhelm of Pernštejn is very important for our topic,<sup>62</sup> because he formulated contemporary definition of a nation, not in terms of territorial jurisdiction, but native language. He clearly differentiates between the “land” (Kingdom, Duchy etc.) and “nation”. According to him, members of the same nation are all, who are able to communicate with each other in their native languages, no matter what country they live in and regardless of their social status or religious affiliation. Specifically, he meant Czech, but his experience was also influenced by his long stay in Hungary,<sup>63</sup> where he acted as an important military leader and trustee of King Matthias Corvinus.

The more pronounced expansion of linguistic identification as a state-building element was interrupted by the Reformation, which introduced a confessional element into political life, which quickly gained more weight at that time.<sup>64</sup> The confrontation of these two principles (national versus confessional) occurred in Germany just before the outbreak of the so-called Schmalkaldic War (1546–1547). Martin Luther himself tried in vain to convince Emperor Charles V that it would be more beneficial for him as emperor to bridge the religious disputes and unite the

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62 Petr VOREL, *Nationality and confession in the political life under Jagellonian dynasty (Contribution by Vilém of Pernštejn to the formation of a new social model)*, in: E. Doležalová – J. Pánek (eds.), *Confession and Nation in the Era of Reformations*, pp. 113–138.

63 The vast territory of the medieval Hungarian state created a completely unique linguistic environment, because in addition to the three main European language groups (Slavic, Germanic and Romance), the linguistically completely unrelated Hungarian occupied an important position, even as the language of the elite. This issue is summarized in Jenő SZÜCS, *Nation and People in the Late Middle Ages*, in: J. Szücs, *The Historical Construction of National Consciousness*, pp. 153–176.

64 Heinz SCHILLING, *Nation und Konfession in der frühneuzeitlichen Geschichte Europas (Zu den konfessionsgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen der frühmodernen Staatsbildung)*, in: K. Garber (ed.), *Nation und Literatur im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit*, pp. 87–107.

confessionally divided country using the idea of a unified German nation,<sup>65</sup> for which Luther himself had created a common standard form of language (Hochdeutsch). In a different form, the idea of linguistic identity (as a quality superior to confession) was still used in Bohemia in 1615.

From the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the principle of confessionalisation was already gaining ground in most of Europe. Together with the promotion of absolutist forms of government, the idea of the nation state was pushed into the background. The goal is a country united by faith, not language.

The confessionalisation of Europe was only removed by the Enlightenment reforms and put a definitive stop to by the demands of civil rights that emerged from revolutionary France. Concurrently with the formulation of civil rights was rediscovered the old definition of the nation, formulated already at the beginning of the early modern era: Nation is formed primarily according to the language principle, included all social classes, not just the privileged ones.

How the political forces later dealt with this idea in modern times is another question. The ideologies of nationalism, according to which one nation should have more value than another, have caused many misfortunes in the past two centuries, not only in Europe, but throughout the world. Historical experience shows that national identity is similar to medicine. It has a positive effect to a reasonable extent. Native language and belonging to a specific national community form the basis of each person's personal identity. It has a fundamental influence on the development of education, culture and art. But in the hands of irresponsible politicians, it becomes a dangerous weapon.

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65 C. Scott DIXON, *Martin Luther and the German Nation: The Reformation and the Roots of Nationalism*, in: E. Doležalová – J. Pánek (eds.), *Confession und Nation*, pp. 123–138; Petr VOŘEL, *Šmalkaldská válka v evropských dějinách 1546–1547*, Pardubice 2021, pp. 80–82 – *Válka s Francií jako dočasný integrační prvek Římsko-německé říše* (War with France as a temporary integrating element of the Roman-German Empire).

# Od středověké mnohonárodnostní říše k raně novověkým národním státům (Svatá říše římská a střední Evropa ve 14.–16. století)

PETR VOREL

Autor studie relativizuje problematické tvrzení části literatury, která klade počátek vzniku národních států v Evropě až do období francouzské revoluce a následného 19. století. V rámci této teze je na starší doklady o vývoji národa ve smyslu jazykovém, kulturním či politickém nazíráno jako na etnické kořeny či historické předpoklady, ze kterých se až později vyvinula specifická evropská forma národních hnutí, jež měla státotvorný charakter.

Tato studie poukazuje na významný precedens z doby pozdního středověku, který tomuto interpretačnímu modelu neodpovídá. Jedná se o proces transformace středověké Svaté říše římské na raně novověkou Římsko-německou říši v letech 1485–1495, završený formulováním volební kapitulace Karla V. v roce 1519.

Středověká Svatá říše římská byla státním útvarem, kterým procházely jazykové hranice tří velkých evropských jazykových skupin (germánské, románské a slovanské), které si navzájem nebyly srozumitelné. To se výrazně projevilo už v době vlády císaře Karla IV., který v základním říšském zákoně (Zlaté bule z roku 1356) jasně vymezuje tři hlavní jazyky tehdejší říše: jazyky německý, italský a slovanský (tj. český). Nebyla tím myšlena obecná jazyková identita obyvatelstva, nýbrž tři různé oblasti středověké říše, ve kterých se užívaly ony tři navzájem nesrozumitelné jazyky jako komunikační prostředek vládnoucích vrstev.

To byl hlavní důvod, proč právě v tomto prostoru docházelo k vymezování jazyka jako národotvorného prvku výrazněji než u těch velkých evropských monarchií, jejichž území zahrnovalo vedle hlavního jazyka převážně lokální dialekty téže jazykové skupiny (například ve Francii či Španělsku). Tato odlišnost se výrazně projevila v době politické krize říše za vlády císaře Fridricha III., který sám neměl pro dlouhodobou vládu v říši dostatečné ekonomické zázemí. Doba jeho vlády je obdobím faktického rozkladu říšských struktur na všech úrovních. Císař tak nebyl schopen vojensky čelit útoku uherského krále Matyáše Korvína, který úspěšně obsazoval rakouské území a netajil se záměrem získat pro sebe říšskou korunu.

Pod tímto tlakem došlo k dohodě mezi říšskými stavy a Habsburky o nové podobě společného státu. Nebezpečí Korvínova nástupu na říšský trůn v případě

smrti Fridricha III. měla zabránit včasná volba jeho nástupce, kterým se měl stát císařův syn Maxmilián. Právě tehdy (1485–1486), v době organizování nového daňového systému, jehož prostřednictvím mělo být financováno říšské vojsko na obranu proti Korvínovi, vystupuje do popředí myšlenka transformace někdejší rozsáhlejší středověké říše v národní stát německý. Bohatá říšská knížata a města byla ochotna finančně podpořit obranu proti Korvínovi, ale pouze za předpokladu, že říše bude nově konstituována jako státní útvar stavovského typu, ve kterém nově zřízený zemský sněm a další stavovské instituce budou vytvářet účinnou protiváhu císařské moci.

Územní rozsah Římsko-německé říše, ustavené v nových podmínkách na prvním stavovském říšském sněmu ve Wormsu roku 1495, byl jasně vymezen při vytváření nového berního rejstříku. Pouze ten, kdo je ochoten platit novou říšskou daň, bude součástí Římsko-německé říše, bude mít zastoupení na stavovsky strukturovaném říšském sněmu a bude požívat vojenské i právní ochrany u nově zřízených institucí (říšská vláda, říšský komorní soud). Jednoznačnou definici Římsko-německé říše jako národního státu německého pak obsahuje volební kapitulace Karla V. z roku 1519, která dokonce výslovně stanovuje němčinu jako jediný povolený vnitřní jednací jazyk říše (vedle tradiční středověké latiny). To se pochopitelně týkalo vládnoucích elit; komunikační jazyk poddanského obyvatelstva nebyl podstatný.

Podobný proces probíhal ve většině původních částí středověké Svaté říše římské, které se nestaly součástí nové Římsko-německé říše, a ve kterých žádný z dialektů tehdejší němčiny nebyl jazykem vládnoucí knížecí či stavovské vrstvy (rozsáhlá oblast severní Itálie a země Koruny české).

Na příkladu pozdně středověkého Německa lze dobře dokumentovat základní principy, které provázely formování raně novověkých národních států:

Jazyková definice „národa“ je v té době ještě velmi široká, protože nejsou definovány spisovné jazyky. Velké navzájem příbuzné jazykové skupiny jsou obecně považovány za jazyk společný bez ohledu na menší či větší komunikační problémy při užívání konkrétních zemských či lokálních dialektů. Jednoznačné jazykové kritérium jako rozlišovací prvek je použitelné jen na rozhraní navzájem vzdálených jazykových skupin, což byly ve střední Evropě jazyky germánské, slovanské a románské.

Výrazně roste podíl rodové šlechty na zákonodárné moci, nejčastěji ve formě zemských sněmů. Právě možnost stavovského politického zastoupení na stavovských sněmech (které u středověkých monarchií lenního typu neexistovalo) výraz-

ně akceleruje proces jazykově-národní identifikace této vrstvy. Rychle dochází k tzv. „uzavírání stavů“, tedy jmenovitému výčtu rodů, které do příslušné skupiny v dané zemi patří. U nich je vyžadována aktivní znalost příslušného národního jazyka, bez které se nelze účastnit politického života.

Středověkou univerzální latinu rychle nahrazují v politické komunikaci národní jazyky, zaváděné jako jednací řeč sněmů, soudů i evidence pozemkového majetku. Rozdíly v dialektech uvnitř stejné jazykové skupiny nejsou vnímány jako problém, pokud jde stále o dialekty navzájem srozumitelné. U větších státních celků je taková situace řešena buď volbou jednoho z dialektů jako hlavního státního jazyka, kterému rodilí mluvčí stejné jazykové skupiny rozumějí (Španělsko, Francie), nebo snahou o úpravu hlavní právní dokumentace (usnesení sněmů, panovnické listiny) do jazykové formy, srozumitelné většině uživatelů celé jazykové skupiny (Německo před reformací). Lexikální a gramatickou stabilizaci příslušného národního jazyka (který se později stává obvykle základem moderního jazyka spisovného) výrazným způsobem urychluje knižní a rozvoj gramotnosti.

Jazyková (a z ní odvozovaná národní) identita neprivilegovaného obyvatelstva (vesničanů a větší části městské populace) v té době ještě nebyla z hlediska raně novověkého národního státu zásadním problémem nebo cílem. Už v té době se však i tato otázka stává předmětem zájmu politiků a intelektuálů. Raně novověký národní stát se na určitou dobu stal cílovým modelem státoprávního uspořádání, což našlo svůj odraz i v soudobém politickém myšlení. Na základě zkušeností z prostředí německého a severoitalského formuloval Niccolò Machiavelli v roce 1513 své nejdůležitější dílo (*Il Principe – Vladař*), ve kterém oceňuje kvalitu jazykově homogenního státu (tvořeného jedním národem, ze kterého pochází i sám vladař) ve srovnání s mnohem složitěji ovladatelným územím, tvořeným národnostně nesourodými částmi.

Přesná soudobá definice národa, která už se nevztahuje jen na vládnoucí vrstvu, ale prochází napříč všemi sociálními vrstvami, je obsažena v dochované korespondenci významného českého velmože Viléma z Pernštejna z roku 1518. Tento muž byl po mnoho let členem zemské stavovské vlády (jako nejvyšší hofmistr Království českého) a ovlivňoval (před rokem 1490 jako vojevůdce a později jako diplomat a finančník) i vysokou evropskou politiku. Osobně se znal s císařem Fridrichem III., s polskými Jagellonci i s Matyášem Korvínem. Znal italské prostředí a nechal pořídit skvělý překlad díla italského filosofa Francesca Petrarky do literární češtiny vysoké jazykové kvality. Vilém z Pernštejna ve své korespondenci zanechal výstižnou definici národa nikoli ve smyslu zemském, ale jazykovém: Podle něj jsou

příslušníky téhož národa všichni (bez ohledu na stavovskou příslušnost), kdo jsou schopni se navzájem domluvit svými rodnými jazyky, ať už žijí v jakékoli zemi.

Výraznější rozšíření jazykové identifikace jako státotvorného prvku přerušila reformace, která do politického života vnesla prvek konfesijní, který v té době rychle získal větší váhu. Ke konfrontaci těchto dvou principů (nacionální kontra konfesijní) došlo těsně před vypuknutím šmalkaldské války (1546–1547). Sám Martin Luther se marně pokoušel přesvědčit císaře Karla V., že pro něj jako císaře by bylo výhodnější překlenutí náboženských sporů a sjednocení konfesijně rozpolčené země s využitím myšlenky jednotného německého národa, pro který Luther vytvořil společný spisovný jazyk (Hochdeutsch).

Od druhé poloviny 16. století se již ve většině Evropy uplatňuje princip konfesionalizace, který spolu s prosazováním absolutistických forem vlády odsouvá myšlenku národního státu do pozadí. Cílovým stavem se stává země sjednocená ve víře, nikoli v jazyce. Konfesionalizaci Evropy odstranily až osvícenecké reformy a definitivní tečku za ní učinily požadavky občanských práv, vzešlé z revoluční Francie. A také návrat k již několik století známému pojetí národa, zahrnujícího podle jazykového principu všechny složky obyvatelstva, nejen ty privilegované.