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THE HUSSITES AND THEIR WORK OF  
REFORMATION IN SLOVAKIA

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A Thesis Presented to  
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary  
Department of Historical Theology

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by  
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May 1947

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THE HUSSITES AND THEIR WORK OF  
REFORMATION IN SLOVAKIA

Introduction

In the middle of the fourteenth century central Europe was ripe for a reformation movement, a re-formation of the Church of the day. In consequence of the shameful debasement of the papacy and the deep corruption of the clergy and monks, the influence of the Church upon the moral and religious culture of the people, in spite of the ardent zeal of the homilists and catechists, was upon the whole much less than formerly. Reverence for the Church as it stood was indeed tottering, but was not yet completely overthrown.

The reckless and shameless sale of indulgences often made the exercise of church discipline impossible. It smothered religious earnestness and crushed all of the religious spirit of the people. The discreditable conduct of the mendicant monks destroyed all respect for the confessional. The scandalous use and misuse of the ban and interdict had shorn these of much of their terror. Frightful curses were pronounced at Rome every Maundy Thursday against heretics by the solemn reading of the bull in Coena Domini. Superstition

prevailed, and was all the more dangerous to the welfare of Christ's kingdom here on earth as time went on. <sup>1</sup>

The conditions in the Bohemian Church which precipitated the reform measures of Hus and others were as corrupt as those in the land of the Lutheran Reformation. Simony, the traffic in benefices, concubinage, and all grosser forms of immorality were prevalent in the Church of the fourteenth century. In fact, the statutes of Archbishop Ernest show clearly by their prohibition what was the common practice of the day among the clergy - frequenting of taverns, the wearing of lay dress and weapons by priests, refusal to marry, bury, confess or administer the sacraments save in return for money payments was common. An archdiaconal inspection of the year 1380 revealed that of the thirty-two parish priests of Prague itself, sixteen were living in open scandal. Charges of theft and even highway robbery against the lower clergy were far from uncommon. <sup>2</sup> A visitation committee of the years 1370-1380 speaks of adamistic dances at the parsonages of priests. <sup>3</sup>

Even the hierarchy itself was in a state of decentralization. During this period the Church was agitated and shattered by the great papal schism which began with the death of Pope Gregory XI in the year 1378 and lasted until the year 1417. Some of the cardinals who had been embittered by

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1. Prof. Kurtz, Church History, Vol. II, p. 193

2. Robert W. Seton-Watson, The History of the Czechs and the Slovaks, p. 33

3. G. E. Hageman, Sketches from the History of the Church, p. 116

Gregory's successor, Urban VI, left Rome for Avignon, France, where they elected Pope Clement VIII and declared the election of Pope Urban VI invalid on account of coercion. The Church now had two popes fulminating against each other. Each had his own college of cardinals and thus protracted the schism by new papal elections. At this period of Hus' career Gregory sat in Rome and Benedict XIII in Avignon.

This led to difficulty in Bohemia. At first the Emperor Charles IV was deprived of his emperorship and remained as king of Bohemia, being called Wenceslaus. He at first supported Gregory, but later renounced him, calling on the prelates to observe strict neutrality towards both popes. The Bohemian nation at the University of Prague maintained its neutrality, but the other nations held for Gregory openly. This resulted in the foreign nations losing their votes and the Czechs increasing their votes at the University.

Even before the Hussite reformatory movement, which received its strongest impulse from Wyclif's writings, voices of protest had been heard in Bohemia, not so much against the fundamental errors in doctrine as against the fruits of these errors as they showed themselves in the life of the Church. Into this world of immorality among the clergy stepped a German Augustinian, Conrad Waldhauser. He soon opened his attacks upon the clergy for their luxurious and evil living.

He didn't accomplish anything too great before his death. More remarkable and successful was a young Moravian priest,

Jan Milic of Kromeriz, whose ascetic life, devotion to the Scriptures and fiery eloquence drew crowds to hear him. He, as well as Waldhauser, found his real support among the masses, who were increasingly alienated from the corrupt and worldly church of the day. He preached against the immorality of the clergy of the day and of the laity with utmost severity and had converted one whole district of the city of Prague from a life of shame to one of honor and decency.

This particular beginning of reform measures was inaugurated at the instigation of Charles IV, then emperor of the land, king of Bohemia. He was succeeded by Wenceslaus IV, a weak king, who became king of Germany and Bohemia. During a fit of rage Wenceslaus ordered the prelate of the Prague See arrested. Among the others arrested was the Vicar-General and other high clerics. The Prelate, John of Jenstein, was released, but the others were sentenced to death by drowning, and were reprieved only on giving written pledges of secrecy as to their treatment.

The unfortunate John of Pomuk, the Vicar-General, was so broken down by his tortures that he could not sign the necessary document. He was then dragged down to the famous Charles Bridge, bound hand and foot, and ruthlessly flung into the Vltava River. Three centuries later (1729), under the name of St. John of Nepomuk, this cruelly wronged, but quite insignificant prelate was to be made the object of a zealous cult by the Jesuits, and was to serve the masses as a counter-attraction to the heretic Hus.

This tactlessness soon led to a revolt against Wenceslaus IV by his barons, and Wenceslaus was succeeded by his brother Sigismund, then ruler of Hungary. But Wenceslaus was not to be deposed from his throne quite so easily. Tho deposed from the Bohemian throne by his barons and nobles, he still retained the German throne. He was displaced in Bohemia by Rupert. Sigismund, the only serious candidate for the crown of the Roman Empire, which was now vacant, vied to secure control of the Crown and thus increase his empire. The other two men who considered themselves candidates and electees were Rupert and Wenceslaus. There were now three rival kings of the Romans added to the crying scandal of three popes contending for the voice of Christendom.

All this added to the gross immorality of the clergy. The seed of reform as laid by Waldhauser and Milic now brought out the talents of Thomas of Stitny and Adalbert Ranku, members of the lesser nobility. These two men had an intense devotion for Scriptures and a zeal for primitive Christianity, which led naturally to a denunciation of worldliness in the Church of the day. These two men wrote in the Czech language, the language of the people, and so do not rate with the historians of the world.

They were followed by Mathias of Janov, (a pupil of Jan Milic), the true forerunner of Utraquist doctrine. Mathias, the confessor of Emperor Charles IV, carried on his work with even greater zeal and success through his writings. As

a learned and popular preacher in both Latin and Czech, Mathias attacked the excessive veneration of pictures and statues. He laid great stress upon the practice of daily communion. In his preaching he used the vernacular, and tho learned, preached in a less scholastic tone than the other clergy. He was the first to call the Emperor's attention to the necessity of a reformation of the Church. He persuaded a merchant of Prague by the name of Kreuz (Kříž) to erect a chapel which was called Bethlehem Chapel, since the Bread of Life was to be preached from its pulpit in the vernacular.

Thus there was some spiritual leaven already active among the Bohemians. These were the men who preceded the reformer of the Bohemian and Slovak Church in Europe, John Hus. Indeed, Bohemian soil was favorable to the growth of men of saintly life and endeavor, to whom the reform of public and private morals was a vital issue.

#### John Hus

John Hus, the man in a large measure responsible for the ground work of the Reformation in Slovakia, was born in Husinec, Bohemia in the year 1369 of peasant parents. He entered the University of Prague, and by the year 1396 had attained the degree of Master of Arts. Two years later he became a regular lecturer, and then dean of the philosophic faculty. In 1403 he was appointed rector of the University of Prague.

During his rectorship at the University, Hus was called as

preacher of Bethlehem Chapel, the church which later became the center of Hus' fiery preaching against the abuses of the day. It is at this church that Jan Zizka, the one-eyed and later totally blind leader of the Hussites, heard the fiery preacher, and was inspired to fight the cause of this preacher.

"There is no manner of doubt that Hus during his earlier career was in full accord with the prevalent theology of the day. There is an apparently authentic story of his having spent his last penny upon the purchase of an indulgence during the first public traffic in Prague in the year 1393."<sup>4</sup> The first sign of a clash of Hus with his ecclesiastical superiors came at the time when a party at the University demanded the condemnation of 45 articles from the works of Wyclif as heretical and the banishment of all adherents of these writings. It wasn't so much the articles which Hus defended, as that many of them were a gross and self-evident distortion of what Wyclif had said. But Hus and his followers at the University were outnumbered in their opinion.

This brought about a disturbance in the University itself. The Czechs held to Hus; the German masters of the University took the orthodox side of the Roman Church. This led to bitter resentments. The fact that Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, was not gaining anything by either the argument or the presence of foreign students caused him to recall the three

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4. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 42

votes which the other nations had and give them to the Czechs. The Germans and the other representatives had only one vote combined. This brought about a split, and the German masters (professors) and students left the University. Leipzig University thus saw its birth with these former Prague professors as the professors.

Students of history are still debating how Hus became acquainted with Wyclifite doctrine. Two theories exist: students brought it over from Paris University, where the doctrines were being discussed at the time; the other that the members of the suite of Anne, Bohemian wife of the English king, Richard II, brought it back.

This threatened ban against the writings of Wyclif brought Hus to study the doctrines of Wyclif even more than before. Jerome of Prague, one of Wyclif's best students, and later a martyr to the cause of Hus, had studied at Oxford, and knew the doctrines of Wyclif thoroughly. This, plus the fact that Hus was preacher at the Chapel of Bethlehem, brought on the change in Hus, and Hus now began his work as reformer.

Because of the hostile attitude which Hus showed in condemning the ban as imposed by the hierarchy, Hus himself was soon put under the ban. This caused a general commotion throughout Bohemia among all classes of people. Riots in Prague were the order of the day. The archbishop became the object of public contempt. The government sided with Hus, who continued to preach at Bethlehem Chapel, and became increasingly

bolder in his accusations.

The Archbishop, Zbinko, died in the year 1411, and with his death the religious movement in Bohemia took a new turn - disputes concerning the sale of indulgences arose. John XXIII, since expunged as a pope by the Roman Catholic Church,<sup>5</sup> had issued a bull for plenary indulgence in order to raise money for his war against the king of Naples. Hus soon raised his voice against the traffic of indulgences. Three young men were arrested because of their approval of Hus and their opposition to the Church in the sale of indulgences, and were promptly beheaded. Complaints were then brought to John XXIII, who excommunicated Hus and pronounced the Interdict against Prague. Hus appealed from the Pope to Jesus Christ as the Supreme Judge. This only intensified the excitement among the people, and in compliance with the wish of the king Hus left Prague. He stayed at the castle of one of his protectors, where he wrote his work "De Ecclesia".

Hus was thus appealing from the authority of the Church to that of the individual conscience, especially when he resisted the prohibition upon his preaching, and declared that "we must obey God rather than men in things which are necessary to salvation." Bishop Creighton states: "It is the glory of Hus that he first deliberately asserted the rights of the individual conscience against ecclesiastical authority, and

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5. Anonymous, "Who's Who in the Papacy", Newsweek, Vol. XXIX, (Feb. 3, 1947), p. 64

sealed his assertion by his own lifeblood." 6

Hus shortly after this, with the Emperor's guarantee of safe-keeping, was called to a council at Constance, where on the sixth of July, 1416, he was condemned as a heretic, tied to a stake and burned. His ashes were spread in the Rhine, so that no trace of his remains could be used as relics for a sect. But the water of the Rhine never did completely wash away the memory of Hus, for his memory and his teachings were to find root in the people of the city and country around the Bohemian nation.

Hus' reformation is important in this, that he taught that the rule, source and norm of faith is Scripture, not tradition, and that the head of the Church is Christ, not the pope.

During his short-lived activity as a reformer of the Church, Hus had no wish to attack the system of the Church of Rome. But the necessity of attacking the abuses of the Church led him on step by step to set up the law of Christ as superior to all other enactments, as sufficient in itself for the regulation of the church. This law of Christ he defined as the law of the Gospel, as laid down by Christ during His sojourn on earth. His only offense was his definition of the Church and his denial of the infallibility of the papacy and its necessity for the being of the Church. "He was not condemned for any heresy of doctrine - but only through evil will

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6. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 51

was he accused because he spoke against the pomp, pride, and avarice and other wicked enormities of the Pope, cardinals, and prelates of the Church." <sup>7</sup> He had struck at the abuses of the foundation of hierarchical centralization.

In all his departures from Romish doctrine Hus was dependent upon Wyclif, not only for the subject-matter, but even for the mode of expression. He did not, however, separate himself quite so far from the Church doctrines as his English master. He firmly maintained the doctrine of transubstantiation. He was also inclined to withhold the cup from the laity. Tho he sought salvation only from the Savior crucified for us, he did not refuse to give any place to works in the justification of the sinner, and even the invocation of saints was not wholly condemned by him.

The most complete exposition of his doctrine is found in the tract of The Church (De Ecclesia, 1413). Augustine's doctrine of predestination is its foundation. He distinguishes from the church as a visible human institution the idea of the church as the true body of Christ, embracing all elected in Christ to the blessedness from eternity. Its one and only head is Christ; not Peter, nor the Pope; for this church is no monster with two heads. Originally and according to Christ's appointment, the bishop of Rome was no more than the other bishops. The donation of Constantine first gave him power and dignity over the rest. As the church in the beginning

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7. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol.V, p. 384

could exist without a pope, so the church until the end can exist without one. The Christian can obey the pope only where his commands and doctrines agree with those of Christ. In matters of faith Holy Scripture is the only authority. Fathers, councils, and popes may err; only the Word of God is infallible.

### I. The Hussite Movement in Bohemia.

The execution of Hus aroused intense indignation in his native country of Bohemia. "It branded Bohemia in the eyes of Christendom as the home of heresy."<sup>8</sup> This was doubly resented as an injustice and as a national insult. Czech resentment was specially directed against Sigismund, whose broken pledge towards Hus was in full accord with his perfidy in the past.

Sigismund, who up to this time thought that the death of the leader would quell the disturbance, now was confronted with the realization that things were not going to be as easy as he thought. The death of Hus had an effect on Bohemia opposite to that which he had expected. The rage of the populace knew no bounds, and almost the entire population, from the nobility to the lowest classes, arose in protest.

When news of Hus' death in Constance reached Prague, the populace resorted to rioting and attacks on the Iron Bishop's property, which was partly seized by the local authority. Disturbances directed against the clergy broke out everywhere, especially against the monks. Even the archbishop had difficulty in saving himself from the rage of the people. "Churches and monasteries were destroyed and general havoc was wrought with the Roman clergy."<sup>9</sup>

The Council in Constance on the other hand, unmoved by

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8. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 56.

9. G. E. Hageman, Sketches from the History of the Church, p. 121.

the angry protests of the nation, intensified its persecutions. A general excommunication was pronounced against the followers of Hus. Their churches were seized and in many cases completely destroyed. Here the people often assembled and knelt in prayer on the broken ruins hallowed by martyrs' devotion. Women bearing young children knelt and wept on the dismal remnants of those houses of worship where their marriage vows had been taken and their babies admitted into the unity of Christians. The prisons became too few to contain the multitudes apprehended; the crowding and foul air drove thousands into a frenzy of madness. Money freely offered for information of the retreats of Hussite followers introduced the pursuers everywhere. "Sixteen hundred (Hussites) disappeared in the deep mines of Kuttenberg when German Catholics stormed that area."<sup>10</sup> Many others died by drowning or by fire. A great army of martyrs arose; and yet the nation continued Hussite still more intensely than before. One Hussite pastor, after much violent suffering, when placed on the pile with three peasants and four children, and exhorted to abjure, replied, "God preserve us from it! We are ready to suffer death not once only, but if it were possible, even a hundred times rather than deny the divine truth which has been so clearly revealed to us in the Gospel."<sup>11</sup> After the pile had been lit the pastor took the children within his arms, joined them in

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10. P. S. Novak, Dejiny Cirkve Krestanskej, p. 74.

11. Robert H. Vickers, History of Bohemia, p. 410.

a hymn, and all were consumed together.

Even in remote places the Hussites became the objects of fanatical pursuit. A merchant of Prague, named Krasa, having uttered language upholding the doctrine of Hus, at once became a prisoner at Breslav. The following day a student from Prague was shut up in the same dungeon. The merchant cheered the young, despondent student with the words, "My brother, how highly are we honored that we are called to bear public testimony to our Lord. The conflict is short; the reward eternal. Let us think on the better death of our Savior, and the sufferings of the many martyrs of the truth." <sup>12</sup> Such cruelties caused the iron to enter the soul of Bohemia.

Even those who up until now did not agree with Hus and his teaching now joined forces with the followers of Hus. They declared Hus to be a "man of pure manners and unsullied fame, who taught the precepts of the Gospel according to the doctrines of the Fathers and the Church, abhorred all errors and heresies and earnestly exhorted us and all the faithful to peace and neighborly love, both in word, writing and deed, and set the example by his own tranquil and edifying manner of life." <sup>13</sup>

The followers of Hus now sent a note to the Diet demanding the right of unhindered preaching. With this note in the hands of the Diet, the group proceeded to frame a kind of

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12. Vickers, op. cit., pp. 410-411.

13. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 56.

Solemn League and Covenant, pledging themselves to joint action in defence of free preaching in resistance to the ban of the Council and in acceptance of the University's opinion in dogmatic matters. One writer states: "They promised to defend and guard the true ministers of Christ with sword in hand." <sup>14</sup> This was first signed by 69 nobles, but their number soon swelled to 452. They were led by Čenek of Wartenberg, Laček of Kravar, and Boček of Podebrad.

A rival Catholic League was also formed, but made little headway. John the Iron, bishop of Olomutz, found himself dangerously isolated and alone. Archbishop Konrad became party to the exhortations of the Council and laid Bohemia once more under an interdict. In Prague most of the churches had by this time fallen into Hussite hands, and all parts of the country soon were affected.

This was further heightened when the Council took action against Jerome of Prague, a personal friend and ardent pupil of Hus. Jerome, a wide-traveled man, spread the cause of Wyclif and later Hus' reformation wherever he went. In 1403 he reached Palestine, and with his rhetorical skill expounded the cause of Wyclif and Hus. He also made his presence felt at the Universities of Oxford, Paris, Cologne, Heidelberg, and Vienna. His skill in the use of language is evident in some of the satiric verses he composed against the abuses of the

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14. Hugo Traub, Všeobecný Dejepis, Vol. II, p. 125

day, and in his Dialogue and Trilogy composed while he was at Oxford. <sup>15</sup> Jerome was subjected to a recantation of his master's "heresy", and in a state of weakness brought on by prolonged illness signed the recantation. This was looked upon by the people as a great humiliation. Jerome, however, soon withdrew his recantation and a year after Hus' death suffered the same fate as his teacher. On the whole Jerome was a vacillating individual. He lacked the character of his teacher.

The Council was not content with disposing of the two biggest men, but challenged the 452 Bohemian nobles and lords. They were summoned to appear before the Council. But the lords and nobles ignored the summons. It was not long before a complete break was in sight. The interdict was completely disregarded, and almost from the first the clergy of the anti-Conciliar party proceeded to dispense Communion in both kinds in the leading churches of Prague. While Hus still lived Jacob of Stribro and other priests, with the consent of Hus, began observing the Lord's Supper in both kinds, administering both bread and wine to the laity. <sup>16</sup> "Nothing shows more clearly the idealist character of the early Hussites than their adoption of the Chalice as the symbol of their faith." <sup>17</sup> The chalice became the visible symbol of the Hussites, which they placed on their churches and flags. Another evidence

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15. Ján Jakubec, Dejiny Literaturny České, Vol. I, p. 132.

16. Ludovít Neckár, Dejepis Křesťanskéj Cirkvi, p. 43.

17. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 56

that the Hussites were serious in their reform measures at this time was the almost universal supplanting of the Latin language by the mother tongue, Bohemian, at worship.

It was at this point that a division in the ranks of the Hussites became evident. All of Hus' followers were agreed that there were many desirable reforms to be sought in the Church of the day. But not all were agreed as to the extent of these reforms. There were some who were not agreed on the administration of Communion in both kinds as one of the desirable reforms. They formed the moderate Catholic party who were known as the Calixtines. They later took the name Utraquists, from the Latin phrase: *sub utraque specie*. The Calixtines were strongest in Prague and were sometimes called by the name Praguers.<sup>18</sup> They insisted on the administration of the Lord's Supper in one kind, the cup being withheld from the laity. By 1436, the date of the signing of the Compactata, the Calixtines conceded to Communion under both kinds. They were to remain Hussites in name for a short time, but moderately Catholic in practice. The Praguers, or the moderate Catholic party, were led by Jan of Pribrama and Christian of Prebatic, Prokop of Plzen, Peter of Mladenovic, Vavrinec of Brezovo, and Simon of Tisnovo.<sup>19</sup>

A new party formed to the left of the Calixtines which observed and held to Communion in both kinds. This group rejected the Mass, purgatory, and all but two of the sacra-

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18. Robert J. Kerner, Czechoslovakia - Twenty Years of Independence, p. 17.

19. Makubec, op. cit., p. 150.

ments, and above all insisted upon the Bible as the sole authority in all matters of belief, to the exclusion of the oral tradition of the Church as upheld by the University.

The more fanatical group, the leftists, congregated in the southern districts of Bohemia, and held conventicles in the open air. Their chief center was the small town of Ústí, to which they gave the Biblical name of Tabor, really a name for the assembled group and not of Biblical origin, as one writer puts it. <sup>20</sup> The Taborites, as they called themselves, would have no reconciliation with the Romish Church, regarding as fundamentally corrupt in doctrine and worship whatever is not found in Scripture, and so soon passed over into violent fanaticism and iconoclasm. It was this group which was to carry on the Hussite wars. Their leaders were Mikuláš of Pelhrimov, the priest Jan Čapek, Vaclav Koranda, Sr., Jan Nemeč, and later Peter Payne. <sup>21</sup>

During the three years following Jerome's death the breach between the moderate party and the fanatical, more radical group among the Hussites steadily widened. The University of Prague, which had come to occupy the position of arbiter on all doctrinal issues, had set its face against the extremists, took up an uncompromising view on the Sacrament, and declared Communion in both kinds to be necessary to salvation. This did not help alleviate any of the problems of

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20. Jakubec, op. cit., p. 150.

21. Traub, Všeobecný Dejepis, p. 127.

union.

In the year 1417 the fathers of the Council prescribed a series of 24 articles intended to withdraw the Bohemians from the Hussite heresy. However, Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, forbade the publication of these articles in his dominions. Meanwhile, the University of Prague, under the influence of the Calixtines, drew up a series of 15 articles formulating a code of religious tenets intended to compose their differences.

Sigismund now thought everything was to return to normal. He returned to Constance and attempted to remind the Council of the promised reform in the Church. But when the Council would not yield to the infallibility of the Pope, the Emperor found himself at his wit's end. He ordered the king of Bohemia, Wenceslaus, his brother, to restore former priests to their charges. The most popular reformer, John Jessentz, was banished under this order.

Wenceslaus' edicts of restoration created great commotion. The magistrates entreated that three churches in Prague should be set apart for Calixtine (Utraquist) communion; the privilege was granted. However, the people generally saw the old forms restored, and that with resentment. The schools also created dissension. The people of Bohemia were again facing a gloomy future. During the same year the king issued an order for the disarmament of the people of Prague. Jan Žižka, the one-eyed, ardent follower of Hus, and later leader of the Hussites, interposed and stated to the king that the burghers were always

ready at his command to use their property and their lives in his defense against his enemies. This polite assertion of the ancient prerogative of the nation happily succeeded. With this on their side the Praguers had weapons with which to open the conflict, which at this time already was inevitable.

The threats of the Council, the changed attitude of King Wenceslaus, the quarrels throughout the country parishes, and the exclusion of the people from the churches created so profound a sense of discontent and approaching danger that the reformers of Usti selected the strong post of the hill and fortified it. This was afterward named Tabor, a fortified refuge in case of need. It was a natural fortress. Here in the summer of 1419 the people encamped to worship God freely under the open sky.

July 22nd of this year a great congregation was called together on the hill. From all parts of Bohemia and Moravia a multitude of more than forty thousand assembled and partook of communion under both kinds on tables erected for the occasion.<sup>22</sup> This meeting created strong religious enthusiasm and strengthened the hearts of all engaged. Preaching, processions, singing, praying, communion, led every day by a different pastor, and "religious rejoicing of the most peaceable and exhilarating description filled the days."<sup>23</sup> All were "brothers" and "sisters", and all were happy together.

Meanwhile, the contentions in Prague resulted in the

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22. William H. Jellie, The Study and Homiletic Monthly, p. 841.

23. Vickers, op. cit., p. 420

forcible suppression of Hussite instruction in the schools which ended in the complete surrender of the Hussites to the Catholic party. The Hussite books were corrupted and filled with Catholic pictures. A Hussite (Utraquist) procession, led by Jan Želivo, a priest carrying a monstrance, through the streets of Prague was overwhelmed with stones thrown from the windows of the city hall where a Catholic council had been installed by the king. The hall was stormed under Žižka's leadership. Seven councillors were thrown from the windows and impaled on the pikes of the paraders below. The city was once again in turmoil. "This action first gave the Hussite movement a revolutionary and anti-dynastic character."<sup>24</sup>

The king vowed vengeance against the entire Hussite sect. He took away three churches of the Hussites in Prague. This only aroused the Hussites the more. Under Žižka they stormed the city and took over the cathedral of St. Nicholas by force. The king would undoubtedly have taken more stringent measures, but his days were numbered. After a short, gloomy sickness brought on by the town hall scene, he fell victim to an apoplectic stroke.<sup>25</sup>

Public order and discipline in the city of Prague, greatly shaken by the events of July 30th, were almost shattered by the death of Wenceslaus. The anger of the population declared itself after the king's death in unbounded measure. The dis-

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24. Count Luetzow, The Hussite Wars, p. 12.

25. Novak, op. cit., p. 75.

contented elements of the old section of Prague at once directed their wrath and fury against the ornaments, organs, pictures and other peculiar furniture of the churches. They were torn down with ruthless fury. A period of iconoclasm was at hand. Priests, monks and friars fled or concealed themselves in fortresses or castles. Many of their adherents followed them. Monasteries were broken up, palaces burned, public houses of assignation openly encouraged by the late government were torn down. The same scene took place in other cities throughout the whole land of Bohemia and Moravia. <sup>26</sup>

Up till now there had been sporadic, but rather disunited attacks from both sides. The Bohemians, threatened at home by a feeble and vacillating king, and abroad by the official emissaries of the papal pontiff, now felt themselves obliged to gather in numbers for self-defense. This marks the alignment of the Hussites into ranks of marching Christians who soon made themselves known throughout Europe. It marks the beginning of the Hussite Wars, wars which were to keep central Europe embroiled for 17 years (1419-1436).

The Hussites gathered on Mt. Tabor. While Jan Želivo, the noted preacher, taught them the doctrines of the Bible, the one-eyed and later totally blind leader Žižka trained the Hussites in the use of arms. And well worthy was he to do so. His fame extended to all parts of Europe. His ability and prowess in war were still fresh in the minds of many people.

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26. Vickers, op. cit., p. 422

Many recalled how Jan Žižka had wielded the mace before the eyes of Henry V of England and had taken the honors of Agincourt. Others, according to tradition, place him in high positions in campaigns in Poland. Suffice it to say, Žižka was a military leader par excellence. The Hungarians later said of him: "He is not a human being, but a devil, for he (the devil) gives him such advice and counsel, that we cannot harm him." 27

Žižka welded his peasant forces into a strong unit. Garnished with flails, maces, pikes, crossbows, swords, and with gunpowder, the Hussites presented a rather weak-looking army. "The kernel of his army consisted of farmers armed with flails, from which protruded spikes. On the end of long halberds were forks; long iron hooks served as a means of de horsing cavalrymen." 28 One writer speaks of the Hussite army using gunpowder. 29 Thus was Žižka's army equipped. But with Žižka's penchant for rallying his forces to his side, Žižka was ready for battle with the most formidable of foes.

Religious sentiment, however, threatened to undermine these arrangements. The principle of non-resistance operated on many minds. It is characteristic of the rugged scruples which lay behind the creed of the Hussites that Žižka should have addressed the inquiry to the University as to whether material warfare was permissible for the Word of God. The

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27. Karol Kálal, Dejiny Slovenska, p. 34.

28. Stephan Tuhy, Dr., Evanjelicko-Luteransky Kalendar, p. 136.

29. Traub, op. cit., p. 129

decision authorized force to repel cruel aggression and tyrannical oppression.

It was in this spirit that the Hussites, guided by Taborite leaders, prepared to resist Sigismund. With Ústí, now known as Mt. Tabor, as their fortified headquarters, the Hussites marched. Žižka, following entirely original tactics, inspired the masses with his own enthusiasm and welded the peasants and townsfolk into a disciplined army capable of resisting in the open field the mounted chivalry of Bohemia and Hungary. Due to the small number of men and equipment which Žižka had in the early years of the Hussite Wars, Žižka had to confine himself to defensive wars almost exclusively. But this did not hinder Žižka too greatly. Attacked at Sudomer by greatly superior forces in the spring of 1420, he achieved victory by a new formation of mobile wagons, which checked hostile attacks and offered a base for sudden sorties. "At first he used ordinary peasant wagons with sides and bottoms protected by boards. Afterwards the outside or wing-of-battle wagons were improved to suit the military purposes required of them. When the army was on the defensive the wagons were parked in such a way as to form a huge rectangle, thus providing Žižka's men with points d'appui like those offered by the ramparts of a fort. On the march the supply and commissariat wagons were placed between the outside files, and in the event of an unexpected attack by cavalry the wings were able to close up and reproduce the rectangular formation. To

do this successfully order was an essential condition, and was still more necessary when the laager moved up for a surprise attack. A sudden sortie of massed bands from the wagons would then turn an attack into a rout, if the enemy had previously been physically and morally shaken by heavy firing. Unless the enemy's discipline was strict and the leader in effective control of his forces, the effect of such sorties was frequently devastating." 30 This was the order of march which was to make the Hussite armies famous in the annals of history, for with this formation, as yet unexploited by any other army, and with the forcefulness of speech and the uncanny knowledge of terrain, human nature, and methods employed by the opponents, Zizka was to defeat hosts numerically stronger than he counted as times. One writer puts it in these words: "The blind old leader could speak as well as fight and could marshal and guide the passions of men with a skill equal to that with which he conducted armies." 31 Thus he brought the Taborite army to fight even when they did not want to fight. Many a certain defeat and inevitable massacre was turned to victory in this way.

By the end of June, 1420, large crusading armies began to converge upon Prague. The soldiers were drawn from almost every nation in Europe and therefore lacked real corporate spirit and unity. They were convinced of the hideous wicked-

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30. Seton-Watson, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

31. Gillett, The Bohemian Reformation, p. 501.

ness of the Bohemians, and were ready to massacre first, and then inquire into the religious beliefs of their victims. The Taborites and Utraquists, tho differing in belief, combined forces to preserve Prague. The enemy was signally defeated.

This victory, gained through the combined action of the two groups, encouraged the victors to attempt a compromise of action and opinion. During the battles, discussions were going on among the spiritual leaders of the Hussites. Altho Prague and Tabor fought together when the common foe appeared, yet the differences of religious views gradually became fixed in formal creeds. Each party endeavored to convince the other, and in the divergent feeling that resulted an open rupture became inevitable when the external pressure would be removed. The two parties became more and more embittered toward one another. The aristocratic Calixtines, at whose head was John Rokycan of Prague, declared that they would be satisfied if the Catholic Church would concede four articles to them. The Taborites regarded this as shameful treason to the cause of truth, and continued the conflict alone. <sup>32</sup>

The result of the compromise was drawn up in the four Articles of Prague, which were to remain the Charter of the Hussite faith. In it they announced that "the Bohemian nation and its Christians trusting loyally in God, stand with all their goods, for life and death, as best they may, against everyone, for the following four Christian Articles, resting

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32. Kurtz, op. cit., p. 212

upon the New Testament of Jesus Christ:

I. That the Word of God shall be freely and without hindrance proclaimed and preached by Christian priests in the kingdom of Bohemia.

II. That the holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ under the two kinds of bread and wine, shall be freely dispensed to all true Christians who are not shut off by mortal sin.

III. That since many priests and monks, held many earthly possessions, against Christ's command and to the disadvantage of their spiritual office and also of the temporal estates, such priests shall be deprived of this illegal power and shall live model lives according to Holy Scripture, and following the way of Christ and the Apostles.

IV. That all mortal sins, and especially those that are public, as also other disorders contrary to the divine law, shall be prohibited and punished by those whose office it is, and that so the evil and false repute of this country may be removed and the well-being of the kingdom and of the Bohemian nation may be promoted." 33

This document was to serve as a model spiritual charter for the world. It was both ideal and practical, linking reform with social order and justice in the state. But more than that, in the words of Bishop Creighton, "these articles were a worthy exposition of the principles of the Reformation; the first asserted the freedom of man to search the Scriptures for himself; the second attacked one of the great outposts of sacerdotalism, the denial of the cup to the laity; the third cut at the root of the abuses of the ecclesiastical system; and the fourth claimed for Christianity the power to regenerate and regulate society." 34 This charter served until the time the northern countries, especially Germany, took up the

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33. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 62/

34. Ibid., p. 62.

task of reform on a wider scale.

Sigismund, however, denounced the charter, and refused to abide by it. With the aid of the Pope he set out even more ruthlessly to root out the heresy in Bohemia. The intolerance of the Roman Church and that of the Emperor Sigismund led to hostile reactions by the Hussites. Neither party could be held innocent. When the Hussites were treated beastly in warfare they retaliated with like measures. The German chronicler Windecke remarks that amid the savagery of captured and burning castles, it was still the Hussite practice to spare the women and children.

The Hussites with inferior forces defeated armies of the Emperor and the Pope numbering as high as 130,000 men, 90,000 foot and 40,000 horsemen.<sup>35</sup> Other large forces were defeated before the battle started. "The fame of the Hussites spread far and wide, and the enemy was often paralyzed with fear simply upon hearing the battle hymn of the Hussites 'Kdož jsou Boží Bojovníci' (O Ye Warriors of the Lord God)."<sup>36</sup> The famous Hussite war-song is often called the Bohemian Marseillaise.<sup>37</sup> Spurred on by victory Žižka and his valiant band went on to new goals. The armies of Žižka now left Bohemia for Moravia and Slovakia, touching Austria and Lusatia, details of which shall be discussed later.

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35. Jellie, *op. cit.*, p. 843.

36. George Dolak, "The Hussites in Slovakia", The Lutheran Beacon, Vol. I, (November, 1944), p. 166.

37. Luetzow, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Upon his return from Moravia Žižka was struck down by a plague which was devastating the countryside. What war could not do an epidemic did.

Žižka's loss was deeply felt by the Taborites. With their leader gone, the future indeed looked gloomy to some of the Taborites. Some Taborites mourned the loss of Žižka so greatly, that they perpetuated the memory of their leader by calling themselves Orphans. They became more fanatical than the already extreme Taborites. <sup>38</sup>

But another great leader came to the fore in the person of Procopius the Great, also known as Procopius the Bald. Under Procopius the Great the Hussite armies made new advances and new sorties. Germany was invaded. The Hussites advanced through Germany, passed through Berlin, and reached the Baltic Sea. <sup>39</sup> The electorates of Saxony, Thuringia and Silesia were invaded on this campaign and laid waste. Seventy towns were ravaged and burned to the ground according to one writer. <sup>40</sup> For the first time the Germans were forced to negotiate on equal terms instead of demanding unconditional surrender. When German armies under the leadership of Frederick, elector of Saxony, invaded Bohemia, the Hussite armies repulsed the attacks and completely routed the enemy. By this time the attacks were a matter of fire and sword. Everything was laid waste. There were times when the Germans fled in such haste

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38. F. Kulháněk, Ludové Dejiny Československé, p. 92.

39. Traub, op. cit., p. 129

40. Kulháněk, op. cit., p. 92

that booty was abundant in the field. The Hussenflucht was to remain one of the most painful memories of the fifteenth century in Germany.

The Pope, Martin V, urged all Europe to send its warriors against the beleaguered, but still invincible Bohemians. Warriors from the Netherlands, Alsace, Switzerland, Swabia, France, Bavaria, Saxony, Thuringia, Hesse, Brandenburg, Magdeburg, Mecklenburg, Pomerania and Silesia joined forces. 200,000 men in the field prepared to defeat and destroy the "heresy" of the Bohemians. Procopius advanced to the relief of one of the beleaguered garrisons with about 17,000 men. So great was the terror of the very name of Bohemian and Hussite that the investing enemy army confusedly took to flight before the enemy showed his face. The imperial host wasted away while the Hussites marched into Austria and Silesia.

By the year 1431 the last great crusade of the nations against the Hussites had taken place, but with no effect. The Hussite armies under Procopius then marched into Hungary and Moravia. In 1431 Cardinal Caesarini with an army of 130,000 attempted to annihilate the Hussites. The cardinal's army laid waste the open country and the cities which they entered. But while the Hussite army was still a mile distant their shout and song were heard, and confusion and alarm spread among the cardinal's army. Wild disorder reigned. The entire army of the enemy, wagons, horses, footmen became a tangled mob, trampled each other down in a mad effort to

escape, and fled in dismay.

With this defeat still sorely remembered, the Catholic parties called for a peace. The Czechs had attained the summit of their military power and glory. At no period was the fate of Europe so completely in their hands. And yet the Hussites were only too willing to have peace. They were tired of war. Procopius at the head of a delegation of 300 went to Basel to effect a reconciliation, a compromise. John Rokycan, the Calixtine chieftain, and Peter Payne were the two greatest spokesmen of the Hussite cause at this Council. Thus, the Calixtines had the greater say of the two factions. After much discussion the following formal articles were proposed and adopted by the Council:

I. The Holy Sacrament is to be given freely in both kinds to all Christians in Bohemia and Moravia, and to those elsewhere who adhere to the faith of those countries.

II. All mortal sins shall be punished and extirpated by those whose office it is to do so.

III. The Word of the Lord is to be freely and truthfully preached by the priests of the Lord and by worthy deacons.

IV. The priests in the time of the law of grace shall claim ownership of no worldly possessions. 41

Beyond a question of doubt the Calixtines were the victors in this Council. The negotiations, the tedious and repeated discussions at Basel, and the impatience of the Calixtines produced a sense of enmity against the Taborite party, who were accused of revolutionary designs, and whose obstinacy

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41. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 72

was charged with the prevention of a settlement. The military position of the Taborites was thus seriously weakened. Open strife took place. Tired with war, the Calixtines aligned themselves with the Catholic party and the Imperial party against the Taborites. After four years of virtual inactivity, while the Council of Basel was in session, the Taborites were anything but prepared for a crisis. Thus in 1434 at the battle of Lipany/The Taborites were defeated and their leader fell a victim of war. "Hussitism had weakened itself by internal dissension and the Catholics in the land now became very strong." <sup>42</sup> With this civil war in Bohemia came to an end. Sigismund was recognized as the undisputed sovereign after seventeen years of war against the Bohemians.

What brought on these terrible wars? Tho the conflict between German and Slav was always one of the major elements involved, yet it is utterly false to suggest that the Hussite movement was mere cover for national fanaticism. The religious issue dominated Czech national life, just as in the literature of the period it drove all other issues into the background. "Bohemia at this time was intellectually more advanced than Germany," and many of its nobles, tho they were brave warriors, felt a genuine interest in religious questions, and had anxiously hoped for the very necessary reform of the Church. <sup>43</sup> In one sense it may be said that the Czechs or Bohemians were a mere mouthpiece of a well-nigh universal move-

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42. Kerner, op. cit., p. 18.

43. Luetzow, op. cit., p. 6.

ment of revolt against the corruption of the medieval Church.

Count Luetzow names these three reasons for the Hussite Wars: "the antagonism of the Bohemians to the Church of Rome, the revival of the Slavic national feeling, and the rise of the democratic spirit, which is to a greater or lesser extent evident in many European countries at the beginning of the fifteenth century." 44

The results of the Hussite Wars or the Hussite movement in Bohemia were important. First of all, the Church lost the greater part of its power. The Roman Church had been challenged, and that rather successfully. No longer was it the "only church". Its very doctrines had been attacked.

In the second place, the Catholic Church lost the greater part of its secular possessions and political power. Wealthy monasteries either disappeared or were greatly impoverished. The Catholic Church lost its economic dominance over the Secular Estates. Prelates, who up till now had been represented in the Bohemian Diet and had exerted political power of significance, were now without political power.

In the third place, the lesser nobility became important. Up till this time the lower nobility had been very insignificant. Now they came into power, and were politically represented in the Diet of the Bohemian government.

In the fourth place, the Hussite Wars gave increased importance to the towns. The towns received more rights in

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44. Luetzow, op. cit., p. 1.

public affairs. 45

Thomas A. Masaryk, the first president of the Czechoslovak Republic, says this of the Hussite wars: "I see in the Hussite Wars the peak of our history. In these wars there was not only an unusual glorification of the army, that we knew how to defend ourselves in the eyes of all Europe, emperor and Pope, but also an energetic effort towards true Christianity, for a righteous solution of the social question, endeavor for morality, and a blooming of literature and culture. The tongue and spirit of nationalism prospered because the Czechs at that time had a deep-rooted Christian conviction."

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45. Kamil Krofta, A Short History of Czechoslovakia, p.49.  
46. Ján Durovic, Obnovená Cirkev, p. 17.

## II. The Hussite Movement in Slovakia.

Slovakia, then under Hungarian rule, was not to remain independent of Bohemian influence. Already in the fourteenth century, 1346, Emperor Charles transported eighty poor priests to Slovakia. During the reign of Sigismund, the Emperor of the Hussite period, another group of Bohemian priests found their way into Slovakia. Through this means a Bohemian influence was exerted on the life of the Slovaks. <sup>47</sup>

Another strong influence was brought to bear on the Slovak nation by the Slovak students who attended the University of Prague. At that time there were over 7000 students from all parts of Europe enrolled at the University of Prague. According to the register of the University, many of these students were from Slovakia. <sup>48</sup> They became acquainted with the Hussite movement, and when they reached their homes, they undoubtedly, to a lesser or greater extent, disseminated the views of the University of Prague and of the Hussites.

One such student was Laurini of Nitra. Already in the year 1417 he was accused in absentia before the bishop of Nitra as the "greatest heretic". In 1419 he appeared personally before the vicar of Olomouc, and in the presence of his accuser denied all charges of heresy and upheld his alleged errors. In his estimation he was innocent. <sup>49</sup>

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47. Branislav Varsik, Husiti a Reformacia na Slovensku do Žilinskej Synody, p. 7.

48. Kulhanek, op. cit., p. 71.

49. Jan Kvačala, Dejiny Reformacie na Slovensku, p. 30.

Thus already in the early period of the Hussite Wars the Slovaks heard of the cause of Hussitism and its wars for the free preaching of the Word. They were to learn more of it when these same Hussites invaded their own native provinces and besieged them. "During the wars of the Hussites the evangelical teaching of the true martyrs was spread among the Slovak people." <sup>50</sup> Slovakia was not to escape feeling the mighty power of the Hussite hordes.

There were two major periods of Hussite history in Slovakia. The first came under Jan Žižka and Procopius the Great and extended from 1423-1436. The second period was under Jan Jiskra's leadership and extended from 1437-1457.

A. Slovakia under the Leadership of Žižka and Procopius the Great (1423-1436).

History records six incursions of the Hussites into Slovakia. In 1423 the Hussites entered Slovakia under the leadership of Jan Žižka. The Hungarians did not oppose Žižka's advance, nor did they interfere with it. They wished to ascertain if some of his men would leave the ranks, hoping then to defeat him. It was not that they were not prepared, for they had assembled a large force of horsemen; they just were not risking anything against such a well-known leader. The Hungarians were reportedly to have said of Žižka: "He isn't a human being. He is a devil of the devil, for he (the devil) gives him such counsel, that we cannot do him any harm." <sup>51</sup>

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50. Johannes Verbis, Die Märtyrerkirche der evangelisch-lutherischen Slovaken, p. 66.

51. Karol Kalai, Dejiny Slovenska, p. 34.

Žižka and his troops entered Slovakia, then part of Hungary, from Moravia around the city of Skalica. They penetrated as far as Trnava before withdrawing. Nothing was accomplished on this campaign. The purpose of this campaign, according to one writer, was to avenge Sigismund's attack on Bohemia and to arouse and incite the Slovak nation. 52

The next incursion was already under Procopius the Great. In 1428 the Hussites were once again on the march. Sigismund was at this time engaging the Turks along the lower Danube, and so was not in a position to attack the Hussites. The Hussites, unopposed, marched through southern Slovakia, and, taking Skalica and Senica, passed through the White Mountains to Modra, Orešany, Pezinok, Sv. Jur, Ložnica, Trnava and Kostolany. They then proceeded southward to Bratislava, which was called Prešporok. Toth-Szabo states that the Hussites on this campaign had 60 secret adherents within the city of Bratislava who set fire to the homes of the city at the approach of the Hussites. 53 The Hussites then returned via the cities of Cachtice and Nove Mesto, but not without leaving a strong guard in Skalica and Trnava. 54

During the year 1429 groups of Czechs began migrating to Slovakia. From this time on groups left Bohemia, so that by the time Jan Jiskra took over leadership, it was a matter of

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52. Neckar, op. cit., p. 95.

53. Varsik, op. cit., p. 9.

54. Franko Sasinkek, Stručny Dejepis Uhorska, p. 81.

mass migration. 55

The third incursion was in the spring of 1430. Under the leadership of Kúdelník of Breznica ten thousand Hussites entered Slovakia. During this campaign great losses were incurred on both sides. Kúdelník himself was killed. 56

The next attack came in 1431 under Procopius who went in as far as Trenčianské Banice, through Trnava, Nitra and Levice. After ten days of strenuous fighting the Hussites withdrew. 57

The fifth campaign waged against the Slovaks came in 1432, when the Hussites adopted the shrewd tactics of the earlier Greek warriors. A number of Hussites disguised as merchants gained entrance to the cities which they were to beleaguer. Under the pretense of visiting the city fair for the purpose of trading and exchange, they looked over the defense installations of the city. At nightfall these same Hussite "merchants" opened the gates of the city to the approaching Hussites. In this way many a town was taken without bloodshed. Trnava and Trenčín are among the recorded towns where this method was employed. At the conclusion of this campaign the Hussites left settlements or garrisons of Hussites behind when they withdrew to Moravia. These garrisons were in Likava, Topolčany, Skalica, Holič and Trnava. Some of these Hussite garrisons were intact for 2-3 years. 58

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55. Gustáv Kadlečík, *Dejepis*, p. 271.

56. Stanislav Klima, *Slovenska Zem*, p. 299.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

58. Varsík, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

The last campaign which had its origin in Bohemia came in the year 1433 when the Hussites entered Slovakia via Poland. They touched the county of Spiš and went through the counties of Turiec, Kremnica and Trenčín. On this campaign the Hussites ravaged the land. It was the purpose of Procopius to press the Council of Basel to quick action in favor of the Hussites. They had been in session for quite some time already, and to impress them with the formidable might of the Hussites Procopius set out to ravage the land. And ravage it he did. The cities of Holič, Stara Ves, Kežmarok and Prešov were burned out. On the westward trip the Hussites went through the counties of Kremnica, Trenčín and Turiec. On such a campaign in which they marched from one town to another ravaging and burning, the Hussites could not have made a very good impression. This particular campaign proved a fateful year for Turiec, especially for the city of Sv. Martin. The Hussites ravaged this city with alarming severity. The city did not have any fortifications, and so was easy prey for the Hussite army. They burned the city to the ground, destroying all the city's documents and letters of privilege. This ended the development of the city.<sup>59</sup> This particular campaign undoubtedly was the reason why the coming of the Hussites did not help the cause of the Bohemian Reformation in the county of Turiec.

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59. Turčianský Svätý Martin a Okolie, p. 13.  
Otto, Skrovina, Z Historie Turčianskeho Evanjelického Senioratu a Jeho Sborov, p.5.

It was during this campaign that some of the nobles of the county of Turiec revoked their Catholic convictions and went over to the Hussites, thus saving their lives. Of these a few voluntarily espoused the cause of Hussitism.<sup>60</sup>

The reason Hussitism made inroads upon the landed gentry is that at this time the gentry was in hard economic straits. Records of 1432 show that three land owners, Thomas and Peter Kerek of Lipnik, and Jan Zoldos of Szarkafalva adhered to the Hussite tenets. This record also states that as a result of their adherence to Hussitism they were deprived of their property by the Emperor Sigismund, and their land was given to other members of the gentry who were in accord with the religion of the Emperor. Peter of Hrabora, a land owner from the region of Trnava also lost his property because of his adherence to the Hussite cause and belief.<sup>61</sup> It seems that throughout Slovakia, just as in Bohemia, many of the nobles accepted the Hussite movement readily.

During this first period of Hussite activity in Slovakia the Hussites had little influence and success in gaining the northern sections. When under the leadership of Procopius the Great they carried out their destructive campaign throughout Turiec burning and destroying everything in their path, they also destroyed any faith the people may have had in them.

However, in southern Slovakia the Hussite cause seems to

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60. Jozef Koreň, Dejepis, p. 69.

61. Varsik, op. cit., p. 11.

have found more favorable soil for acceptance. Feodor Ruppeltd, at present bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Slovakia and located at Bratislava, records one church known to have been organized by the Hussites which exists to the present day. This is located at Rimavska Baňa, and dates back to 1436. <sup>62</sup> Varsik, a contemporary historian of Slovakia who has found many of the supposed claims of the Hussite tradition to be false, says nothing of this particular church.

After the battle of Lipany (1434), in which the Taborites were so signally defeated, the Hussites began withdrawing their settlements and garrisons from Slovakia. No more campaigns of the Hussites against Slovakia were forthcoming. Thus in 1436 Trnava was so completely deserted that the Emperor proclaimed an exemption from taxes for all those who would return to, or settle in, Trnava for the purpose of rehabilitation. <sup>63</sup>

#### B. Slovakia under Jan Jiskra (1437-1457).

The six above-mentioned incursions of the Hussites had an effect on the populace of Slovakia, but not the effect which the next twenty years had (1437-1457). Sigismund vainly tried to reconcile the Hussites during these incursions. By 1436, when the Compactata had been drawn up and accepted, the Hussites were reconciled, and after seventeen years of war with Sigismund, accepted him as the king of

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62. Feodor Ruppeltd, Almanach, p. 284.

63. Varsik, op. cit., p. 15.

Bohemia.

While Sigismund was on his way back to Hungary he died. This left the state in a worse condition than before. Without a leader, one who would guide them through the turbulent seas of war and unrest, the Hungarians were at the mercy of any potential invading forces. The dreaded Turks had a free hand. Albert, Sigismund's general of the Austrian army, took over the reigns of the state. The wife of Sigismund, meanwhile, fled to Poland, where she instigated a Polish attack from the north on the helpless country. The Turks attacked from the south at the same time, pillaging everything and burning whatever they could not take with them. Having secured 70,000 hostages they withdrew. 64

Albert resorted to recruiting an army made up of Czechs and Moravians, and himself led them into battle. But dissension within the ranks soon brought about the rout of his army. On the way back Albert died (1439).

Elizabeth, his wife, was left to administer the affairs of state. She was made regent. Meanwhile, the state set up another king, Vladislav VI. There were now two kings. Elizabeth, seeking the interests of her unborn son, called in Jan Jiskra to protect the throne of Albert's posthumous son, Vladislav V.

Jiskra, at the head of 50,000 - 70,000 mercenary troops

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64. Sasinek, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

(including some with wives and children <sup>65</sup>) from Bohemia, most of whom were Hussites and former soldiers in this area, set out on campaigns to secure the throne. The Hussites did not come to Slovakia "to steal, burn and destroy everything which came into their paths, but came as regular soldiers with the object of guarding and preserving the throne of the king."<sup>66</sup> They took over the towns of Vladislav VI by war. Jiskra and his forces made Vladislav Posthumous' land secure and enlarged his domain. It is this stay of the Hussite armies which is of more importance to the scope of our paper than any other campaign or incursion of previous invading Hussite armies.

Altogether these troops remained in Slovakia some twenty years. The main headquarters were in Košice in eastern Slovakia. From here Jiskra could cover the whole of eastern Slovakia. Another headquarters area was in Trenčín, in Trenčín County. From Trenčín, which was in western Slovakia, Jiskra could cover all of western and northern Slovakia. Still another headquarter was established in Zvolen.<sup>67</sup> From the headquarters at Zvolen Jiskra could cover the counties of Gemer, Nitra, Šariš, Abauj, Zemplin, including the main cities of Trnava, Nitra, Kremnica, Štiavnica and Baňska Bystrica.<sup>68</sup> These three headquarters overlapped, thus assuring complete control of all of Slovakia. From these headquarters Jiskra sent his troops to all parts of Slovakia, wherever necessity

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65. Thomas Čapek, The Slovaks of Hungary, pp. 176-177.

66. Klima, op. cit., p. 201.

67. Kulháněk, op. cit., p. 271.

68. Ibid, p. 97.

demanded.

From 1440-1453 Hus' teaching spread, and with such success that soon all of Slovakia, from Prešov to Košice, especially the counties of Prešov, Nitra, Trenčín, Bardišov, Novohrad, Hont, Turiec, Arva, Liptov, Gemer, Šariš, and Abauj was Hussite. <sup>69</sup> The Hussites' settlements were especially strong in the counties of Gemer and Hont, where colonies of Hussites were to have settled.

After settling down, the Hussites brought out the Bible, books of worship and religious books, all treasures rich with spiritual life. The Slovaks noticed this. "They now realized their own spiritual poverty, their national and spiritual indifference. They now realized they were also a nation, and not just a subjugated non-entity." <sup>70</sup> Slovaks at once joined the cause. Citizens of Skalica, Užhorod and Tisa readily gave of their money and even their lives for the Hussite cause. "They were one in language, faith and hope." <sup>71</sup>

Varsik takes exception to the above. First of all, Jiskra himself was a Catholic, and not a Hussite. Many of his troops were not Hussites in belief or in language, but were composed of Poles, Silesians, and even some Russians. They certainly did not extend the Hussite cause wherever they went or were quartered. As to the strong settlement in the counties of Gemer and Hont, history is silent, says this historian. There

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69. Verbis, op. cit., p. 60

70. Kadlečík, op. cit., p. 13

71. Klima, op. cit., p. 201

is nothing to prove from history that the Hussites made progress in converting these counties to Hussitism. <sup>72</sup>

However, despite the claims of Varsik, the spread of Hussitism seems to have been present to some extent. One writer speaks of papal action in the matter. The Pope, Eugenius IV, through his papal nuncio, delegated Cardinal Julian to move Vladislav in 1444 to extirpate the Hussites and their heretical teachings. This, however, never materialized, for the king and his nobles were soon at war with the Turks. <sup>73</sup>

In 1445 Ladislav, a son of General Peter, called The Czech, with the aid of the native population and Czech soldiers attacked a local monastery, routed the monks and then killed them. This took place in the region of Šahy. They took all the valuables to the city of Levice. Jan of Perin with the aid of Jan Talafuz seized a monastery in the county of Abauj. <sup>74</sup>

Others, such as Peter and Ladislav Szeesi, helped the Hussite cause when they gave the Hussites their castles in Gemer County. They were later deprived of these castles by King Matthias (1460). Others to be deprived of their castles and possessions for abetting the cause of the Hussites were John of Drienčany in 1466, and Jacob Naver of Never also in 1466. <sup>75</sup>

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72. Varsik, op. cit., p. 16.

73. Verbis, op. cit., p. 61.

74. Varsik, op. cit., p. 18.

75. Ibid, p. 18.

So strong did the Hussite cause become that it prompted Bishop Jan of Sredna to write the following in one of his letters: "Czech soldiers, among other things which we deeply regret, have brought in their Hussite heresy, so that there are many churches in the counties of Gemer, Spiš, and Šaris in which communion is administered in both kinds." 76

When Vladislav VI died, Jiskra's need was at an end. Jiskra tendered his resignation (1457) as leader of the army, and put himself at the service of Matthias Hunady, also known as Corvinus and one time bitter opponent of Jiskra. Many of the Czech soldiers who had served Jiskra joined Matthias' army against the belligerent, invading Turks, and became known as the Black Army.

### C. Influence of the Hussites on Slovakia in the Light of Tradition and World History.

There are many writers who have made claims that the Hussites built churches wherever they had a settlement: Koreň, 77 Verbis, 78 Čajak, 79 Kadlečík, 80 and others. Čapek has this to say: "Judging from the solid dwellings and churches they built, it would seem that they intended to settle permanently with their families in Slovakia." 81 Klein-Tesnoskalsky also

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76. Klima, op. cit., p. 288.

77. Koreň, op. cit., p. 72.

78. Verbis, op. cit., p. 60.

79. Jan Čajak, Dejepis Slovakov, p. 53.

80. Kadlečík, op. cit., p. 13.

81. Čapek, op. cit., p. 68

claims the Hussites built numerous churches of a style peculiar to the Hussites. <sup>82</sup>

Škultěty, however, writes that a mass of soldiers cannot build churches. In the same book he quotes Emil Edgar as saying that a "psychology which would imagine the Hussite army in Slovakia could have been commandeered to build churches is ridiculous." Edgar also writes of inspecting the so-called Hussite churches in Zvolen County, in Gemer and Hont (Radvaň, Rimavská Baňa, Teriakovce, Rimavské Brezovo, Štitník, Traskovo, Rožnava, Ratkova, Črenčany, and Drienčany) and became convinced that not even one of these supposedly Hussite churches is of Hussite origin. <sup>83</sup>

Varsik also takes exception to the claims of tradition and shows that history reveals that the so-called "Hussite" churches in Slovakia are not of Hussite origin. He cites the example of the well-known "Hussite" church in Halužice, supposedly built by the Hussites, but actually built in the twelfth century. The Hussite churches are either pre-Hussite or post-Hussite in date of origin. <sup>84</sup>

The Hussites, however, acquired existing churches and used them as places of worship. Spis county claims 60 to 70 churches in use by the Hussites. <sup>85,86</sup> In the cornerstones

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82. Belo Klein-Tesnoskalsky, Obrazy z Dejín Presovských Evanjelikov, p. 8.

83. Jozef Škultěty, Sketches from Slovak History, p. 85.

84. Varsik, op. cit., p. 21.

85. Belo Klein-Tesnoskalsky, op. cit., p. 8.

86. Klima, op. cit., p. 298.

of such churches as these the Hussites carved their symbol, that of the chalice, as in the case of the church in Almaš in Hont. Churches with chalices carved on their cornerstones, however, are not an accurate record and proof of Hussite-acquired or Hussite-built churches. An account of such a church in Tisa reveals it could not have been built by the Hussites or even dated from the time of the Hussites, for it burned twice and was not rebuilt for some time.<sup>87</sup> It is of historical importance that Evangelicals in Slovakia during Luther's time and during the entire German Reformation used the chalice as a symbol of their faith also.<sup>88</sup>

It is true, tho, that the Hussites used the churches they acquired as strongholds and remodeled them for that purpose. "Originally the church served a dual purpose, that of place of worship in time of peace and as a stronghold in time of public disquiet."<sup>89</sup> Košice, Myslava, Moldava, Sv. Mikuláš, Levoča, and Ružomberok all had churches where the existing churches were adapted for use as strongholds in time of attack.<sup>90</sup>

The above evidence, along with the apparent lack of historical evidence to prove the tradition of Hussite churches makes it nigh onto impossible to ascertain to which period of history to ascribe any of the churches. In 1530 the Turks

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87. Varsik, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

88. Julius Bodnár, Dejepis Cirkvi Kresťanskej, p. 24.

89. Čapek, op. cit., p. 68.

90. Varsik, op. cit., p. 22.

invaded and ravaged Slovakia, burning everything in their path.<sup>91</sup> This incursion and the numerous other wars fought on Slovak soil wrought untold destruction. Libraries and museums were destroyed, leaving little for posterity. At this time whole communities were forced to flee for their lives or be exterminated. They founded new towns bearing old names. Many fled to the White Mountains and founded villages there. Some later returned to their native towns, rebuilt, but on different sites, as is the case with Myjava. Records were lost, and subsequent wars even wiped out these newly created villages and their documents.<sup>92</sup>

Tradition has it that the Hussites colonized Slovakia, especially the counties of Malo Hont, Gemer and Novohrad. Klima mentions that they built homes in colonies they organized, such as Česke Brezovo.<sup>93</sup> Varsik goes into great detail to prove that many of these "settled" sections were densely wooded at the time of the Hussites and so hardly populated. Towns mentioned as having been settled were not in existence at the time, but have a later origin.<sup>94</sup> Had there been large Hussite settlements, as it is claimed, it is probable that history would have recorded it. As such only the settlements of Skalica, Senica, Lednica and Puchov are recorded as harboring large settlements of Hussites.<sup>95</sup>

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91. Varsik, op. cit., p. 26.

92. Ibid., p. 27.

93. Klima, op. cit., p. 288.

94. Varsik, op. cit., pp. 25-28.

95. Ibid., p. 29.

Varsik claims all this tradition about Hussite churches and Hussite settlements came in especially in the nineteenth century, when Hussite tradition was fostered by the clergy to bolster the Evangelicals against the attacks of the counter-Reformation. Reference was made to their ancestors who bravely routed and withstood the attacks of the enemy, and held to their Hussite tenets. 96

#### D. Hussitism in Slovakia after Jiskra.

After the activity of Jiskra came to an end (1457), many of the congregations in the sections which had been most heavily populated by Jiskra's men returned to the fold of the Catholic Church. This was the case in the congregations of Hont. They sought the return of the letters of privilege granted by the Church. This meant that a tenth of the income was to go to their respective bishops and no one else. In many cases the letters of privilege had been destroyed during the wars fought in the respective sections or during the stay of the Hussites. By 1462 among the churches calling for a renewal of their privileges were those of the cities of Rimavska Baňa, Rimavska Kokava, Rimavske Brasovo, Hmst and Tisovec. The clergy of Kraskovo, and Stephen, priest of Ceren witnessed to the loss of the letters of privilege and the desire of the congregations to renew these privileges. From letters still extant it is seen that this supposedly Hussite section of

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96. Varsik, op. cit., p. 31.

Slovakia retained its Catholic tenets, and asked for its letters of privilege. <sup>97</sup>

Some writers have pointed to Czech names as a proof of Hussite remnants, as did Ladislav Bartolomeides. Škultěty puts no faith in this. <sup>98</sup> Varsik points to the presence of Czech names throughout the history of Slovakia, and so has no sympathy for such a proof. <sup>99</sup>

In 1462 King Matthias, in an effort to restore order, signed an order for the release of property of those who had been unfaithful to the government and had held a heresy of some sort. The Hussites were forbidden to demonstrate their religion by this edict. <sup>100</sup>

However, this did not seem to affect too many, as Varsik points out from authoritative sources. In the year 1467 in the county seat of Heves there were only ten heretics, or those who did not abide by the orders of the state, and 2 who had abetted or espoused the cause of Hussitism. In Trenčín and other sections only individuals were found who espoused the Hussite cause, and not groups as is the popular opinion. <sup>101</sup> Either the Hussites had been amalgamated, had disappeared from this section, or they became crypto-Hussites. Thus by the end of Matthias' reign (1490) Hussitism was a dead issue, and Luther's Reformation was still a quarter of a century away.

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97. Varsik, op. cit., p. 34.

98. Škultěty, op. cit., p. 86.

99. Varsik, op. cit., p. 35.

100. Ibid., p. 36.

101. Ibid., p. 37.

Varsik's presentation is a negative, tho a scholarly, unbiased and objective approach to the part which the Hussites played in the preparation of Slovak soil for the German Reformation. He ascribes most of the present historical data found in use by historians, both contemporary and past, to tradition.

Pavel Krížko and Jozef Škultěty, contemporary Slovak historians say history is lacking in details regarding the Hussites. They mention that the barbarous, cruel warfare of a mixed Hussite army (Hussites, Germans and others) resulted in an almost negligible amount of missionary activity, attended by lack of interest and methods of missionary work.<sup>102</sup>

"These armies, representing the rather quickly decaying Hussitism, were composed of many foreigners, 'men from all parts of the world,' according to more reproachful expressions, 'of the scum of the earth'. Their character and organization did not make them fit for religious reformation."<sup>103</sup>

However, Bonfin, Galeotti, Turcius, Ranzan, and Eschenleer, historians during the rule of King Matthias, agree that the Taborites were missionaries and spread Hus' teachings in northern Slovakia. Evangelical writers of Hungary, Bartolomeides, Tablic, Šafárik, Hurban, Tomášik and the Czech Catholic writers Hermenegild, Jozef Jireček and Ladislav Píć also

102. Jraj Janoska, Cirkevné Listy, p. 186.

103. Škultěty, op. cit., p. 84.

testify to the positive work of the Hussites in Slovakia. 104

Čapek summarizes it this way: "The settling in Slovakia of these warriors (Hussites), whom religious persecution had driven from Bohemia, was productive of far reaching results. In the first place, the Hussites had sown the first seed of Protestantism among the people whose country they had invaded. Secondly, they imposed on the natives their idiom, forcing it to the front in schools and churches, and to a certain extent in communal affairs, to the exclusion of Latin (which up to this time predominated). Most important of all, the Hussites brought about the regeneration of the people in a national sense." 105

So complete was this adoption of the Czech language that under Matthias' rule not a single document was issued from the royal chancery in Latin or Magyar. 106 Books of worship were now mostly Czech. Slovaks adopted Czech literature, and now attained great literary fame. 107

Čaják lists these results: 1) "Close relations between the Bohemian nation and that of Slovakia were effected. 2) The Hussites who settled in Slovakia, especially under the leadership of Jan Jiskra, brought their Hussite views of religion, especially their way of life, to bear upon the people." Janoška comments: "Spiritual hymns, sincere prayer, sermons from the Word of God, a godly life, these were the spiritual

104. Janoška, op. cit., pp. 186-187.

105. Čapek, op. cit., p. 115.

106. Skultety, op. cit., p. 77.

107. Kulhánek, op. cit., p. 98.

codices of the Hussites." 108 3) "They brought along books, among them books of religion, the writings of Hus, and the Czech Bible. This was now used and soon became common and known. 4) The Czech language now took on popular usage among the people of Slovakia. This meant the downfall of the currently used Latin." 109

At the present, and until further research fully exhausts the work of the Hussites in Slovakia, a quotation from Čajak would best conclude this topic: "The teachings of Luther were quick to take root in Slovakia, for here it had a prepared soil, for the teachings of Hus, which compared favorably with those of Luther, had already been sown there, and the people were ready to renew the cause of reformation which had for the most part been eradicated or at least suppressed for a number of years." 110

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108. Janoška, op. cit., p. 207.

109. Čajak, op. cit., p. 50.

110. Ibid., p. 61.

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