

WHITE MOUNTAIN AS A PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE

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Abstract Emperor Ferdinand II's Catholic troops won a crushing victory over the Protestants' army at the battle of White Mountain (Bílá Hora), near Prague, on 8 November 1620. Shortly after that, White Mountain became a place of remembrance and a symbol of prevail for the Catholic Bohemians. Servite monastery and a church attached to it, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, were built on the battlefield, with support from the Emperor, which symbolised the victory of the Emperor's troops and that of the Catholic Church. White Mountain was an important place for Protestants as well. For Protestant Bohemians, the defeat was the beginning of the end of their religious freedom. Their works keep quiet about the events leading to and succeeding the battle. However, their narratives about the events of their personal lives and sufferings did use the name of this symbolic place as a point of reference for a new time frame. For them, White Mountain was a place, a cause, and a take-off of losing their homes and properties, and those of their compelled escapes and exiles.

Keywords White Mountain, place of remembrance, exile, Czech language, funeral sermon.

The battle of White Mountain (Bílá Hora) was fought at White Mountain in the vicinity of Prague, on 8 November 1620, where the united armies of Emperor Ferdinand II joined battle with the troops of the countries of the Czech crown (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) and their allies.¹ The battle went on for less than two hours and concluded with the victory of the imperial army but it did not cause a major loss of human lives on either side. After this, the victorious army could march to the suburbs of Prague without encountering resistance, and despite the fact that because of the coming of the winter and their insufficient military power would not have allowed a siege of the town, because of its gates having left open, it was easy and quick to be occupied and plundered. The leaders of the imperial army gave their

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¹ Ivana ČORNEJOVÁ et al., *zost., Velké dějiny zemí koruny české*, vol. 8, 1618–1683 (Praha: Paseka, 2008), 58–64.

people permission to free plundering in consequence of which noble palaces and burghers' houses fell victim to the invaders, and not even the houses of the Catholics were saved.

Following the battle, the leaders of the noble uprising gathered on 8–9 November to discuss the further plans. They agreed not to attempt to gain back Prague but to hand over the town to the imperial army. Despite that his advisors encouraged him to stay and reorganize his remaining troops, Frederick V of the Palatinate, the Czech king elected by the insurgents left the city and fled to Silesia the day after the battle with his household and the Czech nobles who supported him.² The king did not intend to stay there for long, he planned to travel further to the Low Countries and then to England, where he would ask for help from his father-in-law, King James I, to continue the fights. The participants of the uprising considered the leave of Silesia only temporary. They expected that Frederick would find allies, collect army and continue the fights from the direction of Silesia.

When Frederick left Prague, he left his whole chancellery behind, which after the capture of the city fell into the hands of Maximilian, elector of Bavaria. The documents of the chancellery contained details of the royal election, the uprising and the name of all who had taken part or had had important role in the events.³ The confiscated documents were the bases of persecutions, lawsuits and confiscations against the nobles and burghers who took part in the uprising. The Bavarian elector who led the imperial army promised that the leaders of the revolt would not be killed but he left every further decision to the emperor. Ferdinand II on 11 February 1621 established a committee to investigate the role of different persons in the uprising.⁴ Karl I, prince of Liechtenstein was elected as head of the committee, who ordered thirty leaders of the uprising to “appear at court within six weeks.” Most of the listed persons, including the ruler, left the country by then and were at Brandenburg; something well known at the imperial court. Karl again ordered the leaders on 2 April to appear at court within three days. As it did not happen, on 5 April, the decision was made and the listed persons were condemned to death and forfeiture of their properties for their involvement in uprising against the emperor.⁵ This, in the period usual form of sentence, made it possible to donate lands to German and Spanish nobles who were loyal to the emperor. From the countries of the Czech crown the punishment was afflicted on Bohemia the most seriously as this was the center of the uprising (Defenestration of Prague, 1618) and it was the Bohemian nobility that dethroned Ferdinand II. Twenty-seven people (three nobles, seven knights and seventeen burghers) paid with their lives at the

² Otakar ODLOŽILÍK, “Ze zápasů pobělohorské emigrace”, *Časopis Matice moravské* 56 (1932): 1–58, 369–388; 57(1933), 59–157, 3.

³ ČORNEJOVÁ et al., *Velké dějiny země...*, 65–68.

⁴ ODLOŽILÍK, “Ze zápasů...”, 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

Main Square of Prague's Old Town on 21 June 1621.⁶ In Moravia sixteen rebels were convicted but their death sentence was moderated to imprisonment. Just as in the case of Bohemia the confiscated lands in Moravia were also donated to persons loyal to the emperor. In Silesia the revolting nobles got off even more lightly – John George I, elector of Saxony made a bargain with the emperor in the so-called Dresden agreement that the nobles could ransom their part in the revolt in gold.

The Battle of White Mountain and the following events initiated a major refugee wave towards the neighboring countries. The first wave, directly after the battle itself headed to Silesia after which these emigrants forming groups carried on their way to Brandenburg, Stettin, Přemyslov (Primiswald), Mecklenburg and Berlin. The second wave – set out after the executions – included families of the executed members of the revolt as well as Protestant nobles. The third wave took to the road after the codification of the Revised Ordinance of the Land in Bohemia in 1627 and the year after in Moravia. Amongst the fugitives there were numerous intellectuals and rich burghers who settled in the neighboring countries such as Hungary and Saxony.

The reason for fleeing was that Act XXXIII/A of the Ordinance denoted Catholicism the only accepted religion. This order forced the mostly protestant population of the Czech lands to make a big decision, either to convert to Catholicism, denying their faith, or to flee from the country, leaving their possessions behind. The Czech refugees did not convert to Catholicism, they rather left the country. They were waiting in the neighboring countries for the situation to improve, but as it did not happen, they assimilated linguistically and confessionally within the related communities.

The confiscations were the most serious in the Czech lands and after the introduction of the Ordinance many Protestant nobles, intellectuals and bourgeoisie left the country. Their emigration created a big social vacuum which in a short time was filled by German and Spanish nobles, intellectuals and officers. The majority of the immigrants who arrived to the Czech lands spoke German, unbalancing the usage of Czech and the German languages. In the countries of the Czech lands, apart from Czech, German had also been considered an official language. 1615 decrees were issued and designated Czech to be the only official language but in the period of the uprising as a number of native German speakers had important positions amongst them, such as Count Jindřich Matyáš Thurn or Linhart Colona z Felsu⁷ not even the Czech estates kept to these decrees, consequently strengthening bilingualism which had been prevailing for a long time by then.⁸ With the arrival of the newcomers, after the Battle of White Mountain, the scale turned to the

⁶ ČORNEJOVÁ et al., *Velké dějiny zemí...*, 77–84.

⁷ Josef PEKAŘ, *Postavy a problémy českých dějin* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1990), 147.

⁸ BERKES Tamás, *Ködképek a cseh láthatáron: Irodalom- és eszmetörténeti tanulmányok* (Budapest: Kalligram Kiadó, 2009), 26.

dominance of the German language and rolled back the role of Czech in the common communication. The political and social transformations concerned even the local Catholics.

After the failure of the uprising of the Jesuits, who had been considered to be the bad advisors to the emperor, they could return to their stations to continue their activity, however they had to rebuild everything from the ground up.⁹ Their convents, churches and all their movables perished; therefore, they could rebuild their houses and start their activities in the Counter Reformation with the support of the imperial court and the Catholic nobles. Prague was the first station where they could return, and later they managed to get in possession of their previous convents in the countryside.¹⁰ Jesuits saw the place of the Battle of White Mountain as a site of victory where the Catholic empire defeated the heretic Protestant estates that revolted against their rightful ruler. The Catholic leading class saw it clearly that in the new political and social situation the identity forming elements of the countries and peoples of the Czech crown needed new foundations in order to legitimize the situation both in the view of internal and external common opinion. It was ever more important as after the defeat at the battle the country's internal structures changed radically as it was registered as one of the "crownlands" of the Habsburgs. It was important for the Catholic Czechs to emphasize that the beginnings of their faith go back to a long time. The renewal of the feast of Saint Procopius and the growing interest in pre-Hussite Czech history was strongly tied to this effort.¹¹

An outstanding person of this period was Bohuslav Balbín (1621–1688), who lived as a Jesuit priest and was an important researcher of Czech history. During his life he lived in a number of centers of the order such as at Český Krumlov, Prague, Olomouc, and Jičín. His career made it possible to engage in historical research. He completed his first historical work, the *Epitome historica rerum Bohemicarum* in 1669 the edition of which was halted by Martinic the chief-captain of Prague and only was published in 1677 after the permission of the emperor.¹² He wrote his most significant work in 1670, the Latin language *Dissertatio apologetica pro lingua Slavonica, praecipue Bohemica*, which because of its content was not allowed to be printed during his life but which not even the author was intending to published. Even a century later in 1775 it was printed after by-passing the censorship and was not much later put under investigation. Although it was not included on the list of prohibited books, the Prague Gubernium ordered the collection of its copies, laying

⁹ KOVÁCS Eszter, "Légy cseheknek pártfogója, magyaroknak szószóllója...": Cseh–magyar jezsuita összefüggések a kezdetektől 1773-ig (Budapest: PPKE–OSZK, 2015), 51–54.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 53–62.

¹¹ BERKES, *Ködképek...*, 27.

¹² BERKES Tamás, "Hogyan jelent meg Balbín Dissertációja 1775-ben?", in *Amicitia: Tanulmányok Tüskés Gábor 60. születésnapjára – Beiträge zum 60. Geburtstag von Gábor Tüskés*, ed. LENGYEL Réka, 271–283 (Budapest: reciti, 2015), 271–283.

them to waste.¹³ The author wrote his work in defense of the Czech language in which he complained about the untenable situation in Bohemia. The most important reason according to him was that Czechs admitted the foreigners (Germans, Spanish, French), and the immigrants, apart from the large profit and the rich wives did not appreciate or respect the Czech language, customs and traditions.¹⁴ The author lists the periods of Czech history when the Czech language was endangered and in which Germans became the dominant. One of these was for instance the period following the death of King Ottokar II (1230–1278) when “masses of Svabians and Brandenburgers crowded the country, so ten Germans counted to each Czech.”¹⁵ He mentions the Kutná Hora decree of Wenceslas IV issued in 1409 which strengthened the role of the Czechs at the University of Prague and gave rise to the emigration of the Germans (university professors and students) and the foundation of the University of Leipzig.¹⁶ Balbín denoted the noble revolt as the biggest threat to the nation and the language. According to him the Protestant aristocrats pushed the country into devastation assisting not theirs but foreigners to gain power. Although the Battle of White Mountain broke the power of the heretic estates “most of the Czech lands were distributed to foreigners, by and large to soldiers, and the country as a game to be eaten as feast, a hare thrown amongst hounds was torn to pieces.”¹⁷ Balbín emphasized the opinion of the Catholic side when he considered the noble revolt as an uprising of the estates against their lawful ruler and the Battle of White Mountain as the repression of the unlawful lords. But he does not see White Mountain as place of glory. Despite that he admits it was “lucky place” for the Catholic faith in the meantime it was a fate twisting event,¹⁸ the beginning of the Germanization and the effacing of the old Czech population. He compressed the negative experiences of the seven-hundred-year long co-habitation of the two peoples in his work¹⁹ and raised his voice for the preservation of the Czech peoples, language and customs. His work has a dichotomy, repulsion against the incoming German nobles, burghers and officers, and in the meantime an absolute loyalty and trust towards Habsburg power and the emperor.

¹³ BERKES, “Hogyan jelent meg...,” 283.

¹⁴ Bohuslav BALBÍN, *O šťastném někdy, nyní však přežalostném stavu království českého*, zost. Josef DOSTÁL, Národní knihovna 1 (Praha: Družitvo přátel studia, 1923).

¹⁵ Bohuslav BALBÍN, “Értekezés a szláv nyelv, nevezetesen a cseh nyelv védelmében,” trans. MAYER Judit, in *Esszék és tanulmányok: Hét évszázad cseh irodalmából*, vol. 1, ed. Jaroslava PAŠIAKOVÁ, A cseh irodalom könyvtára, 72–100 (Bratislava: Madách Kiadó, 1988), 78.

¹⁶ BALBÍN, “Értekezés...,” 80.

¹⁷ BALBÍN, “Értekezés...,” 85.

¹⁸ Bohuslav BALBÍN, *Krásy a bohatství české země*, zost. Helena BUSINSKÁ, Naše vlast (Praha: Panorama, 1986), 72.

¹⁹ BERKES Tamás, *A cseh eszmetörténet antinómiái*, Res publica nostra: Közép- és kelet-európai összehasonlító irodalomtudomány 8 (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2003), 78–79.

The Protestants who chose to flee and settled in the linguistically related Lower Hungarian communities – thanks to the Treaty of Vienna and the military campaigns of Gábor Bethlen – compared to the situation in the countries of the Czech crown enjoyed incomparably wider freedoms and could practice their religion for a long time. Their intellectual center can be associated with the printing press they brought with them where they printed works written in exile.²⁰ All the Biblical Czech language funeral sermons between 1637 and 1711 in Hungary – with one single exception, a funeral oration from 1684²¹ – were published by this emigrant press.²² Amongst the commemorated as well as the clerics who held these sermons many were not from the Kingdom of Hungary but Bohemia or Moravia. The preachers saw an opportunity in these funeral sermons to reflect on the historical events they experienced in their homelands. Being chased is a recurrent element in their sermons, and they remembered each thing that happened to them since then in relation to that basic moment of fate. In the *personalia* parts of the funeral sermons the preachers discussed the lives and deeds of the dead. The events immediately

²⁰ GULYÁS Pál, “A trencsén–zsolnai könyvnyomda,” *Magyar Könyvszemle* 67 (1943): 118–123; PAPP Ingrid, “Egy felső-magyarországi könyvműhely szerepe a 17. századi lutheránus reprezentációban,” in *Egyház és reprezentáció a régi Magyarországon*, ed. BÁTHORY Orsolya and KÓNYA Franciska, Pázmány irodalmi műhely: Lelkiségtörténeti tanulmányok 12, 315–323 (Budapest: MTA–PPKE Barokk Irodalom és Lelkiség Kutatócsoport, 2016).

²¹ RMK II, 1544.

²² The detailed investigation of this body of sources has been going for years now and a monograph has been published recently based on this work. See: KECSKEMÉTI Gábor and PAPP Ingrid, “A magyarországi szlovakizáló cseh nyelvű halotti beszédek kutatásának helyzete,” in *Docendo discimus: Doktoranduszhallgatók és témavezetők közös tanulmányai a Miskolci Egyetem Irodalomtudományi Doktori Iskolájából*, ed. HUSZTI Tímea, 7–14 (Miskolc: Miskolci Egyetem BTK Irodalomtudományi Doktori Iskola, 2013); PAPP Ingrid, “A 17. századi szlovakizáló cseh nyelvű halotti beszédek forrásainak bemutatása,” in *KoraújkorÁSZ: Koraújkor-történettel foglalkozó doktoranduszok tanulmányai*, ed. KÁDÁR Zsófia, KÖKÉNYESI Zsolt, and MITROPULOS Anna Diána, *KoraújkorÁSZ tanulmánykötetek* 1, 106–118 (Budapest: ELTE BTK Történelemtudományok Doktori Iskola, 2014); PAPP Ingrid, “Cseh exulánsok a felső-magyarországi városokban,” in *Kultúrjav. Írásbeliség és szóbeliség irodalma – újrahasonlítva: Fiatalok Konferenciája 2014*, ed. BARTÓK Zsófia Ágnes et al., *Arianna könyvek* 9, 137–143 (Budapest: reciti, 2015); PAPP Ingrid, “Cseh menekültek Felső-Magyarországon a fehérhegyi csata után,” in *Hely, identitás, emlékezet*, ed. KESZEI András and BÖGRE Zsuzsanna, 301–313 (Budapest: L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2015); PAPP Ingrid, “A lutheránus egyház alapítóinak emlékezete a 17. századi szlávajkú magyarországi evangélikus polgárság körében” [Remembrance of the founders of the Lutheran Church amongst Slavic-tongue town citizens in the 17th-century Hungary], *Történelmi Szemle* 59, no. 2. (2017): 299–314; PAPP Ingrid, *Biblikus cseh nyelvű gyászbeszédek a 17. századi Magyarországon: A nyomtatott korpusz bemutatása és irodalomtörténeti vizsgálata* [Funeral sermons in Biblical Czech in the seventeenth-century Hungarian Kingdom (Presentation and literary analysis of the printed corpus)], *Historia litteraria* 34 (Budapest: Universitas Könyvkiadó, 2018).

preceding the Battle of White Mountain however never were part of them; they always referred only to the sorrowful events which resulted in their undesired flee from their homeland. Their silence can probably be attributed to a number of factors. On the one hand even if the emigrants could feel safe in their related Slavic communities in Hungary they still lived in areas under the authority of the Habsburgs and could not express their thoughts freely on the events. On the other hand, it probably caused confusion amongst them that the Protestant estates and the Catholics who supported the uprising²³ in fact ungrounded and in hope of further Protestant supporters elected Frederick V as king who was proven to be neither suitable nor prudent. After the defeat at White Mountain, he fled from the country as soon as possible leaving the capital without defense and leaving behind his whole chancellery which had tragic outcomes regarding the estates and burghers who supported him in the countries of the Czech crown. Amongst the emigrants who settled in Hungary one finds people who left their families and possessions after the Battle of White Mountain therefore when discussing their struggles and spurn they found it better to remain silent about these circumstances.

The defeat at the Battle of White Mountain was the beginning of a number of processes both for the Catholics and the Protestants. Although Catholics could return to their homeland and the Jesuits could start their activity in the Counter Reformation, in parallel, the Germanization of the countries of the Czech crown began. Foreigners were placed in key positions of the country to whom the Czech language and customs meant nothing. For the Protestants, it became the starting point to the historical process that led to the loss of the homeland and the dispersion of the intellectuals. For the citizens of the countries of the Czech crown White Mountain became much more the place of forgetting than of remembrance.

²³ PEKAŘ, *Postavy a problémy...*, 156.