V

Defeated Protestants, Victorious Catholics (Ferdinand II–Charles VI)

The first pan-European conflict, the Thirty Years' War, began on May 23, 1618, with the notorious Defenestration of Prague, in which Czech nobles ejected Habsburg officials from a window of Prague Castle. The opposition of the Protestant Bohemian and Moravian aristocracy to Habsburg absolutism thus changed into open rebellion. In the Czech crownlands, the Česká konfederace (Bohemian confederation) was established as a multidenominational state of equal nations, in which the aristocratic Estates dominated over the ruler. Since the Austrian and Hungarian estates also joined the confederation, the Habsburg monarchy was thereby effectively dissolved. The rebellious Bohemian noblemen, however, were supported neither by burghers nor by villagers. And the neighboring countries, not only Catholic Poland but also Lutheran Saxony, supported the Habsburgs.

Initially the revolt went well, but it ended disastrously on November 8, 1620, in the famous battle of Bílá Hora (White Mountain), when the Bohemian Protestant army was routed by the numerous forces allied under Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II. The aftermath of this defeat was devastating; the leaders were given no possibility of defending themselves; twenty-seven of them were executed in the Old Town Square and large-scale confiscations followed. Among the victims were the writer Václav Budovec, the composer Kryštof Harant, and Jan Jesenius, a physician in the service of Rudolph II, whose family came from Turiec (now in Slovakia). In 1600 he had staged the first public autopsy in Bohemia. Only the year before his execution, he had been appointed rector of Prague University.

All over Europe rebellious estates were being defeated and massacred, but the Czechs were deprived of their kingdom as well. In the New Constitution of the Province of 1627, Emperor Ferdinand II annulled the privileges of Czech estates and the constitutional monarchy was replaced by absolutist rule. The document was the first step to the de facto annihilation of a separate Czech state. In the same year, the emperor issued the Re-Catholicization Decree, which proclaimed Catholicism the only legal religion. In 1654 Charles

The famous Defenestration of Prague of 1618: Czech Protestant aristocrats ejected from a window of the Prague Chancellery two senior officials and one clerk of the Habsburg emperor; they landed on a pile of manure in the moat and were "miraculously" unharmed. From Matthäus Merian, *Theatrum Europaeum*, vol. 1 (1633–1738) (Frankfurt: Wolfgang Hoffman).

University—which in 1409 had become the Czech University, run by the Hussites—ceased to exist, when Emperor Ferdinand III united it with the Clementinum, the Jesuit college founded in Prague in 1556. The new Charles-Ferdinand University was under strict Jesuit control. The Catholic clergy became the most powerful force in the Czech lands.

Protestant aristocrats and burghers had to convert or leave the country within six months. The repressions resulted in an economic collapse, with the exchange rate of Czech currency dropping to a tenth of its original level. Altogether about two hundred thousand Protestants emigrated, including a fifth of all aristocratic families and a quarter of the burghers. Those who remained were forcibly converted to Catholicism. Together with their ancestral religion, the Czechs lost their freedom of speech, and even their language was endangered. After the defeat at Bílá Hora, the German minority began to play a dominant role in the Czech lands.

The Thirty Years' War ended in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia. It dashed hopes of Czech Protestant patriots, who were firmly persuaded that their brothers in faith would never let them down. Representatives of Protes-

tant countries did not insist on restoring the religious and political conditions in Europe to their pre-1620 state. Despite the attempts of Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) to gain crucial Swedish support, January 1, 1624, was set as the binding date, too late to change the unfortunate fate of Czech Protestants.

After the Thirty Years' War, the international position of the Habsburg state was weakened, but internally the power of Vienna increased, above all in the Bohemian crown lands. The Ottoman threat and the stout resistance of the Hungarians forced the Habsburgs to court their favor; in the hierarchy of Habsburg rulers, the Bohemian king was third, after the Hungarian king and the Holy Roman emperor—preparing the way for the so-called Austro-Hungarian Compromise two centuries later.[1]

In the seventeenth century the Czech intelligentsia flourished above all in exile. The most important was Jan Amos Komenský, a theologian and philosopher of education. In 1631 his Latin textbook, *Ianua Linguarum Reserata* (The gates of tongues unlocked and opened), made Komenský's world reputation as a philosopher and educational reformer. He was very influential in educational reform in England and Sweden, and *Ianua Linguarum* was used even by American Indian students at Harvard College in the 1600s. Rembrandt's painting in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, known as the *Portrait of an Old Man*, was recently confirmed as a portrait of Komenský. It was painted in the same year, 1661, as Rembrandt's portrait of Komenský's Amsterdam patron, Jacob Trip.

Komenský conceived of school as play (*schola ludus*); he replaced scholastic memorizing with demonstrative teaching. He also advocated the education of women, which was then a new idea in Europe, although in Bohemia it had already been introduced among the Hussites. Komenský was the first to recognize the power of images as an aid to learning, and *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (The visible world in pictures), published in Latin and German in 1658, was the first schoolbook to use pictures in language teaching. It was the standard Latin textbook around the world until the end of the eighteenth century.

While his initial intention had been to write in Czech, in exile Komenský was forced to use Latin. In his book *Via Lucis* (The way of light), written in 1642 and published in 1668, Komenský proposed a "Universal College" as an avenue toward the perfection not only of religion and learning, but also toward promotion of the welfare of mankind. He proposed the creation of an artificial universal language, "absolutely new, absolutely easy, absolutely rational," a kind of precursor of Esperanto. Not everyone agreed with Komenský's formulations; Descartes dismissed him as no scientist, and Pierre Bayle in his influential *Dictionnaire critique* made fun of his pretensions.

At that time, other European writers were beginning to switch from Latin

to vernacular languages, but in the Czech lands the situation was different. Despite his interest in the Czech language, the great Jesuit historian Bohuslav Balbín did not write in Czech, and even his apology for his mother tongue was written in Latin. This is his most famous work, which he published anonymously—and with good reason; it was immediately banned. According to Balbín, the nation is sacred and its language, a gift from God, must be preserved at all costs. Defending the nation's right to its language, he criticizes the administration of the kingdom, where the church, schools, and ruling class were adopting the German language.[2] For a century the book circulated only in manuscript form, a precursor of samizdat (self-publication).

The insistence on Latin set Balbín apart from his Jesuit literary friends who also wrote in Czech, if only occasionally and with little distinction. Friedrich Bridel was a Jesuit missionary in what were at that time still Protestant Bohemian villages; he wrote meditative poetry that can be compared with that of John Donne and the English metaphysical poets. His most famous Czech text is a poem "What Is God? Man?" (1659). The literary genre with the greatest audience was the sermon. A Catholic priest in southern Bohemia, Ondřej František de Waldt, was a much-admired preacher. His "Sermon on Saint Václav Given in the City of Písek" (1709) documents not only the high level of homiletics in Czech language and its local-patriotic nature, but also the popularity of folk theater, because it was conceived as a play.

In the overall literary activity of the time, Czech farces stood out; mostly anonymous, they were written to entertain at fairs. Originally inserted into more serious theater plays, they were later performed on their own. They present standard comic types—a silly peasant, his quarrelsome wife and frivolous daughter, and a madman. In a fairground entr'acte farce of 1694, preserved in the collection of Jiří Evermod Košetický, the comic effect is achieved also by staging a dialogue between a German-speaking soldier and a peasant who speaks only Czech.[3]

Václav Jan Rosa hesitated for years to publish his monumental and surprisingly advanced Czech grammar.[4] In 1672 he finally decided to present it publicly, expressing in the preface his fear of "the limitless criticism of the harshest judgments." Instead, the book became an immediate bestseller, and until the end of the eighteenth century it was the most popular Czech grammar. At that point, the prejudices of the Czech patriots of 1800 during the National Revival had a lasting effect, and Rosa's grammar was successfully suppressed. Dobrovský, Šafařík, and their followers are responsible for the fact that standard modern Czech is artificial and archaic when compared with its colloquial form. For purely ideological reasons, the Czech patriots bypassed two centuries in the development of the Czech language and re-

turned to its sixteenth-century norm. This is the reason for the present linguistic schizophrenia. Even today, when Czech scholars discuss linguistics, they never speak literary Czech, but its colloquial form. There is no hope of moving away from literary Czech toward the language that is actually spoken today by Czech people, and the only consolation is the fact that a similar phenomenon exists in many other European languages.

Any visitor to the Czech Republic can see that the baroque era was in no way a "dark age." Already around the middle of the seventeenth century, mercantilist ideas found supporters in the city of Brno, which thus began its rise as one of the most prominent industrial centers in Czech lands. In the eighteenth century the Czechs underwent a profound change, reorienting to a monetary economy, where serfdom was finally replaced by wage labor. This opened the way to industrialization, above all to textile and blown-glass manufacturing. Iron mines replaced the less productive mining of silver and other metals, then centered in the region of Ore Mountains (Krušné hory). Land communications were restructured in order to secure better connection between Austria and Saxony and Silesia; rivers were systematically made navigable, not only the Vltava, but also the Labe, Ohře, and Orlice.

The whole country was transformed by baroque ceremonies into an immense theater stage, merging the sacred and profane. The festivities left little trace, but their backdrop, the baroque Czech landscape, is still visible. It is crisscrossed by paths and roads lined with trees; churches dominate the landscape, which is dotted with chapels, statues of saints, and crosses—the Catholic Church being the greatest commissioner of baroque art and architecture. Fields surrounding the villages give way to landscaped gardens overlooked by baroque chateaux as imposing as the monasteries, churches, and pilgrimage sites in the landscape. Thanks to the renewed economic prosperity of the second half of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, art flourished and even acquired distinctively Czech traits. Bohemian baroque architecture was inspired by Italian art, which arrived via Austria, but it was also inspired by Bavaria and France; specifically Slav features appear perhaps in the entablatures and softly curved pediments.

Bohemian baroque was much more willing than the official imperial baroque of Austria to break away from accepted practice; the radical, dynamic baroque designs of Christoph and Kilián Ignác Dientzenhofer, for example, are immediately recognizable for the audacious curvature of their walls and intersecting oval spaces. The person usually considered the most original architect of baroque Bohemia is Jan Santini, for his "baroque Gothic" style, which was a programmatic return to local traditions inspired by politically motivated interest in the Bohemian Middle Ages. Examples include the abbey

of Sedlec near Kutná Hora, the abbey of Kladruby, and the church at Zelená Hora in Žďár nad Sázavou. The wide range of Bohemian baroque architects was complemented by the work of equally distinguished artists—the painter Petr Brandl, the celebrated portraitist Jan Kupecký, the muralist Václav Reiner (Rainer), and last but not least Václav Hollar, a graphic artist whose talents took him to England, and the two sculptors Matyáš (Mathias) Braun and Ferdinand Brokoff.

The charming *Rakovník Christmas Play* included here is another early example of the deep importance of theater in many aspects of Czech life. Since peasants were impoverished and deprived of many rights, a peasant audience would have been cheered by words about the equality of the powerful rich and the powerless poor in the eyes of Jesus Christ. The plebeian attitude adopted in the play was also characteristic of later Czech culture and literary tradition, which explains why the play remains in the Christmas repertoire of Czech theaters.

Abroad, the most popular artists of the baroque era were Bohemian musicians. Especially famous was the Catholic Jan Dismas Zelenka, who spent most of his life as court composer of church music in the Royal Court at Dresden (the grander title of Royal Court composer going to the German Protestant Bach, who admired Zelenka). Zelenka studied with the Prague Jesuits and his distinctive melodiousness was considered a native characteristic setting him apart from his Italian and German contemporaries. His opera *Svatý Václav* (Saint Wenceslas) was presented at the Jesuit Clementinum in Prague on September 12, 1723, to celebrate the coronation of the Habsburg emperor Charles VI as king of Bohemia.[5] This monumental allegorical drama with music and dancing was conceived to remind the emperor that the blood of the Bohemian duke and saint, Václav, was circulating in his veins.

Adam Václav Michna z Otradovic is the best-known, along with Zelenka, among Czech baroque composers; he was Catholic, an organist and composer living comfortably in Jindřichův Hradec until his death in 1676. During his studies with the Jesuits, Michna was influenced by the mysticism of Saint Theresa of Avila, but his poetry was also inspired by the local tradition of Franciscan mysticism and village religiosity. Michna's songs soon became assimilated into folk culture, and his "Christmas Night," known also as "Desire to Sleep," is still sung today; even more often, it is heard in the Czech Republic as a cell phone ring tone.

Despite this flourishing of Czech arts and artists, throughout the nineteenth century Czechs came to believe that their culture had been for the previous two centuries in "universal decline," because of their political and linguistic subordination to the Habsburgs. Only in the 1930s did Czech ba-

roque begin to come into its own; new editions and anthologies of baroque writers were published, and exhibitions of baroque sculptures and paintings began to appear regularly. Since baroque culture was, however, inseparably connected with Catholicism, the real baroque boom arrived only in the last decade of the twentieth century, after the collapse of the communist regime.

Notes

1. The "Ausgleich" of 1867 creating the so-called Dual Monarchy, uniting the thrones in the state of Austria-Hungary, which lasted until 1918.
2. Bohuslav Balbín, *Dissertatio apologetica pro lingua Slavonica, praecipue Bohemica* [Apology for the Slavic and especially the Bohemian tongue] (1672–74; František Martin Pelcl, 1775); the first Czech translation dates from 1896.
3. Zdeněk Kalista, *České baroko* (Prague: Literární klub, 1941), 241.
4. Václav Jan Rosa, *Čechořečnost seu grammatica linguae Boemicae* (1672); see W. J. Rosa, *A Czech Grammar*, translated by G. Betts and J. Marvan (Prague: Porta, 1991).
5. "Under the olive tree of peace and the palm tree of virtue, the Crown of Bohemia splendidly shines before the whole world" ("Sub olea pacis et palma virtutis . . ."); the opera was commissioned by the Jesuits in Prague, and the libretto was written by a member of this order, P. Matouš Zill.