

# OLD TOWN SQUARE EXECUTION 21 JUNE 1621

## Culmination of the Bohemian Revolt

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PRAGA  
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On June 21, 1621, twenty-seven lords, representatives of the Bohemian estates, were executed in the Old Town Square as revenge for the revolt against Ferdinand II of Styria and for *Lése-majesté*. But these were not the only rebels. They were educated protestants and supporters of the fight for an estate monarchy, religious tolerance and freedom of worship. This freedom was confirmed by law in 1609 by the Letter of Majesty from Rudolf II, when during his reign Prague became the centre for science and arts. Rudolf's royal treasury was depleted due a long-standing war against the Ottoman Empire. His deteriorating health meant he was unable to reign properly and he lost the support of the Moravian estates and in turn fuelled the increase in power of his ambitious younger brother Matthias Habsburg. Even the unity of the Czech estate was seriously thrown into disarray and so in 1611, the occupation of Prague was organized, as well as the abdication of Emperor Rudolf II.

The Bohemian estate revolt was caused by the evident recatholicisation efforts and further efforts to limit the rights of Bohemian estates by the successors of Rudolf II Matthias was surrounding himself with radical Catholics and moved his residence from Prague to Vienna. Moreover, as he was still without an heir into his sixties, the expected successor for the Bohemian throne in 1617 was the zealous Catholic Ferdinand from the Styria cadet branch of the Habsburgs. The Bohemian Council accepted a promise from Matthias and later Ferdinand to respect the Letter of Majesty.

Although it was generally known, even before Rudolf II, that the Habsburgs strictly supported an absolute monarchy and purely the Catholic confession, while Ferdinand's counter-reformation campaign in Kärnten and Styria was also known, he was still crowned as the Bohemian king that year.

This step immediately proved to be premature as Ferdinand was brought up under a strict Catholic influence and a Jesuit education (both under the strong influence of the inquisition) and he had no talent for governing. Trusting



1621 execution: This shocking demonstration took five hours and punishments were very cruel. Among others, executioner Mydlář had to cut off the tongue of his friend Jessenius and in order to take rest from decapitations he hung some of them. Heads and hands, which were cut off, were displayed for ten years as a warning. (Museum of the City of Prague, inv. No.: H 001.911/a.)

the elimination of heresy through counter-reformation and saving the souls of his subjects by military force, he left the decisions to his advisors and spent his time amusing himself.

Although already ill at that time, Matthias was still the ruler but he let Ferdinand II take power with his advisors, who immediately initiated restrictions on aristocratic privileges and censorship. One such advisor was the convert Hans Ulrich von Eggenberg, who was later called the "unlimited lord in the name of the emperor". He was very successful as the head of a secret council and was part of the group

deciding on the destiny of the defeated Bohemian estates after the battle of White Mountain, while he actively participated in the recatholicisation of Bohemian lands.

Religious freedom and the rights of the estates were seriously placed into danger. The demolition of a protestant church was the last nail in the coffin, which spurred the open revolt of the Bohemian estates.

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Regrštrj a Poznarnenání/  
Kterj glau a gal trestání/  
Pro to své Rebellowání/  
Měšťané také y Páni.

Stjnání a Mečem trestání títo :

1. Joachym Ondřej/Starý Sljř/  
k tomu Kuka vřata.
2. Wáclaw Budowec.
3. Kryštof Záran.
4. Kaspar Kaplíř.
5. Prokop Dwořecký.
6. Frydrych z Bílé.
7. Gindřich Otta.
8. Wylém Konecchlumský.
9. Bohuslaw z Michalowic /  
k tomu Kuka vřata.
10. Diwís Černín. H
11. Walentin Kochan.
12. Tobiáš Sstefek.

13. Kry.

13. Kryštof Kober z Malestrany.
14. Jan Sultys od Hory/  
Hlava tam poslána.
15. Maximilián Hosiálek z Žatče/  
Hlava tam poslána.
16. Jan Iesenius Doktor/neppro mu  
Jazyk vřezán/pak stat/napo-  
sledy čtrwecen.
17. Gijřk Hauensild/  
k tomu Kuka vřata.
18. Leander Kypř Jurista/  
k tomu Kuka vřata.
19. Wáclaw Mastierowský.
20. Gindřich Kozel.
21. Ondřej Kocaur.
22. Gijřk Kžecický.
23. Michal Wittman.
24. Symeon Wokáč.

Sám se jabil  
Martin Gruweyn/málo před tím/obáwage  
se negatě těžké pokury/gsa w Wězenj/wy-  
skočil na Zámku z Bílé Wěže z wysoka/Hla-  
wu strazyl/a gest čtrwecen/Hlava a Kuka  
na Koňském Trhu na Sprawedlnosti přibita.

Zwěšteni títo :

Jan Kutnaur z Kathauzu z Okna oběssen.  
Symeon Sussický wedle něho tež z Okna  
oběssen.  
Natanael Wodňanský na Šibenicy na Kyn-  
tu oběssen.

Wymřstání a wypowědění títo:

Josef Kubín Kžecník.  
Wáclaw Božecký.  
Jan Šwehla.

Za Jazyk k Šibenicy přibit.  
Mikuláš Starší Serwus w Starém  
Měste Pražském.

Napomenutj.

A protož wábec každému/  
Mladému také starému/  
Má toto k weystraze býti /  
Wěchnost swau za Wěchnost mjtí.  
Nechceli

NA MÍSTĚ ZDE V DLAŽBĚ VYZNAČENÉM  
STÁLO POPRAVIŠTĚ, NA KTERÉM V PONDĚLÍ  
DNE 21. ČERVNA L.P. 1621. OD HODINY PÁTÉ AŽ  
DO DEVÁTÉ RANNÍ OBĚTOVALO ŽIVOT SVŮJ  
PRO HÁJENÍ SVOBODY KRÁLOVSTVÍ ČESKÉHO  
TĚCHTO DVACET SEDM MUČEDLNÍKŮ:

JÁCHYM ONDŘEJ ŠLIK SVOB. PÁN Z HOLEJŠE.  
VÁCLAV ST. BUDOVEC SVOB. PÁN Z BUDOVA.  
KRIŠTOF HARANT SVOB. PÁN Z POLZIC A BEZDRUŽIC.  
KAŠPAR KAPLÍŘ RYTÍŘ ZE SULEVIC.  
PROKOP DVOŘECKÝ RYTÍŘ Z OLBRAMOVIC.  
FRIDRICH RYTÍŘ Z BÍLÉ.  
JINDŘICH RYTÍŘ OTTA Z LOSU.  
DIVIŠ ČERNÍN RYTÍŘ Z CHUDENIC.  
VILÉM ST. RYTÍŘ KONECCHLUMSKÝ Z KONECCHLUMÍ.  
BOHUSLAV ST. RYTÍŘ Z MICHALOVIC.  
MISTR VALENTIN KOCHAN Z PRACHOVÉ,  
RADNÍ NOVÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
TOBIÁŠ ŠTEFEK Z KOLODĚJ,  
MĚŠTAN NOVÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
JAN JESENSKÝ Z JESENÉHO,  
DOKTOR LÉKAŘSTVÍ A REKTOR UNIVERZITY.  
KRIŠTOF ST. KOBER Z KOBERSPERKU,  
MĚŠTAN MENŠÍHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
JAN ST. ŠULTYS Z FELSDORFU,  
PRIMÁTOR KÚTNOHORSKÝ.  
MAXMILIAN HOŠTÁLEK Z JAVOŘIC,  
PRIMÁTOR ŽATECKÝ.  
D. LEANDER RYPPEL Z RUPPACHU,  
MĚŠTAN STARÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
JIRÍ HAUNŠILD Z FÜRSTENFELDŮ,  
DOKTOR PRÁV A MĚŠTAN STARÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
JAN KUTNAUER ZE SONNENŠTEJNA,  
RADNÍ STARÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
ŠIMON SUŠICKÝ ZE SONNENŠTEJNA,  
RADNÍ STARÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
NATANAEL VODŇANSKÝ Z URAČOVA,  
PRIMÁTOR STARÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
VÁCLAV MAŠTĚROVSKÝ Z JIZBICE,  
MĚŠTAN NOVÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
JINDŘICH KOZEL Z PECLINOVCE,  
RADNÍ NOVÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
ONDŘEJ KOCOUR Z VOTÍNA,  
RADNÍ NOVÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
JIRÍ ŘEČICKÝ,  
RADNÍ NOVÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
MICHAL WITMAN,  
RADNÍ NOVÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.  
ŠIMON VOKÁČ Z CHÝŠ A ŠPICBERKU,  
RADNÍ NOVÉHO MĚSTA PRAŽSKÉHO.

Plaque located on the eastern wall of the Old Town Hall.

# BOHEMIAN REVOLT 1618–1620

## A fight for religious freedom and the rights of the Bohemian estates

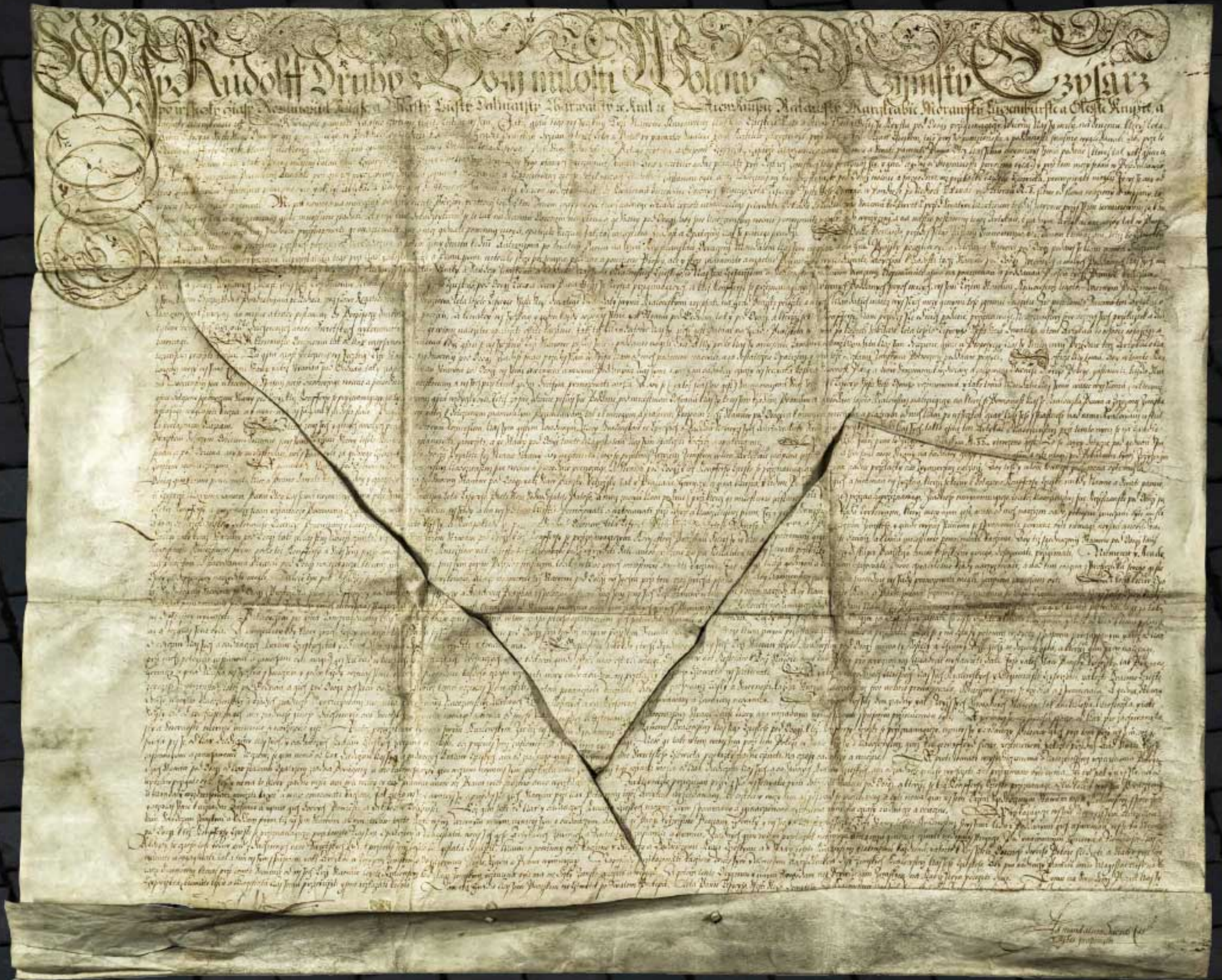


The Bohemian estates revolt was initiated on May 1618 by the defenestration of three fanatic and intolerant Catholics from the windows of the royal stadtholdership in Prague Castle (each of them survived and later they enriched themselves on confiscated properties, while Slavata and Bořita even urged for the punishment of the rebels by the most cruel manners of punishment). A day after, a thirty member body of directors was elected as an interim government, consisting of the estates of noblemen, knights and burghers. However, the Directory had no political concept and it relied mostly on significant foreign assistance. Therefore, the rebellion of Bohemian estates lacked any common support and many estates were rather inclined to an amicable solution of the conflict.

In August 1619, after the death of Matthias, the General Assembly of the Bohemian Crown refused to recognize Ferdinand II as the king and declared him as deposed. One week later, the General Assembly elected twenty-three-year-old Frederick, the elector of the Palatine, the son-in-law of the English king and the formal ruler of the Protestant Union, as the King of Bohemia. Although at the beginning Frederick hesitated to accept the Bohemian crown, he openly showed sympathy to the representatives of the revolt and promised to arrange financial and military help for them. Before the final battle of White Mountain in 1620, the army of the estate was actually in a strategically advantageous position, yet they suffered a devastating defeat.

When the Bohemian estates refused Ferdinand they intensified their military preparations. However, they underestimated the investments into the upcoming conflict and the members of the Directory were even enriching themselves on the confiscated treasury of Rudolf II. The Protestant Union and the former allies of Frederick even became scared of an open conflict and the subsequent threat of a religious war with the Catholic League after Ferdinand II was elected the Roman Emperor (only 9 days after being deposed from the Bohemian throne) and refused to provide the promised military support.

The young, militarily and politically inexperienced Frederick was trying to solve the desperate situation by using his private fortune, but



Letter of Majesty (Rudolfův majestát): The so-called Letter of Majesty, by which Rudolf II guaranteed religious freedom to Czech estates in 1609, granted university and approved 30 defensors to be elected. (National Archives, Archives of the Czech Crown (1158-1935), inv. No.: 2293.)

this only led his native Pfalz to default in 1620. Leadership disputes and poor soldier pay finally caused the army of the estate to become disillusioned. But the army of the Emperor Ferdinand, supported by Wallenstein and Spanish gold from the Catholic League, was much larger in numbers, well organised and the morale was better due to their pay, while they had unflinching faith in God and victory.

After the Bohemian revolt of the estates was suppressed, drastic and cruel measures followed. The Letter of Majesty was abolished by Emperor Ferdinand II shortly after the battle by his cutting and burning of the seal, while he later legalized the Catholic confession as the only privileged confession.

Large court proceedings followed, resulting in the public execution of 27 Bohemian noblemen. According to estimates, five sixths of Czech aristocracy was forced into exile. Their fortunes were confiscated and sold cheaply to the supporters of Ferdinand II. Forced re-catholicisation and Germanisation was initiated, followed by the emigration of the non-catholic population, including priests, educated people and other elites. The Thirty Years' War, hunger, the spread of illnesses and plagues only spurred the dramatic decrease in population.

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Battle of White Mountain: The Battle of White Mountain happened on November 8, 1620 between the imperial army and the army of the estates. In the background, in the left side, there is the summer pavilion in the park behind the wall, while below there is Ruzyně with a church. In the middle on the right, there is Repy with a church, while below there is Hostovice with a church. Military units and the summer pavilion are marked with the letters A–I. Chalcography from 1622. (Archives of the City of Prague, graphic collection, sign: G 1594. Author of the draft: Sadeler, Joan. Tech. elaborator: Sadeler, Raphael ml.)



Frederick V. of the Palatinate: One day after the battle of White Mountain, Frederick fled with just his spouse and child. The Protestant Union was destroyed. Frederick was never forgiven for accepting the Czech Crown. The Emperor occupied his lands and granted them with the titles to his allies. At the age of just thirty six, Frederick died in exile probably of the plague. (Archives of the City of Prague, graphic collection, sign: GP 107. Author: Werff, Adriaen van der. Tech. elaborator: Gunst, Pieter van.)