Preaching in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia. The life and ideas of Milicus de Chremsir (+1374) and his significance in the historiography of Bohemia

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On 6 July 1915 the Swiss city of Geneva was the site of a meeting of Czech intellectuals, politicians and refugees. This gathering would gain great significance in the next few years. The occasion was the 500th anniversary of Master Johannes Hus, the martyr from Prague who was burned at the stake in Constance. The circumstances of the festivities were rather sober. Times were at least as confused and uncertain as five centuries earlier during the unfortunate end of the master from Prague. In 1915 it was not at all certain what would be the outcome of the war that had broken out almost exactly one year earlier, first in Serbia but soon after in Western Europe as well. From the Central European perspective, the Hapsburg Empire had finally come to an end after many attempts to innovate its structures during the nineteenth century. The old world, which had existed in more or less the same form since the seventeenth century, fell apart and its successor had not yet been born.

The main speaker at the conference in Geneva was a professor of philosophy and a former member of the Austrian parliament for the Czechs, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. He spoke after the French historian Ernest Denis who was a specialist in Bohemian history and an important supporter of the
Czech national cause in Paris. Denis gave an interpretation of some developments from Czech history, thus legitimizing and stimulating the chance for change offered by these specific historical circumstances. The Czech people could regain the independence that was taken from them in the seventeenth century. Then, Masaryk made his statement:

Every Czech who is aware of his nation, has to choose either in favor of the Reformation or the Counter-Reformation, either for the Czech idea or the Austrian idea, the institution of the Counter-Reformation or European conservatism. Hus, Žižka, Chelčický, Comenius are our live program.'

Masaryk’s speech marked, in fact, his definitive decision to advocate Czech independence as the only option in the postwar division of Europe. He waited to take this stance as a politician until 1915, even though it was a position that more radical parties had taken in the last days of the Hapsburg Empire. The historiographic argumentation he used in his declaration that year, however, was not new. Earlier he had already identified the Czech cause with the four historical figures he mentioned in Geneva: Hus, Žižka, Chelčický and Comenius. In 1895 he published his famous study Česká otázka, “The Czech Question,” in which he drew a historical line from the earliest times of Bohemian history to determine the political aims of the Czech people. At that time he did not come to the conclusion that independence for the Czechs was the logical consequence of this interpretation. In 1915, confronted with the inevitable fall of the Hapsburg multi-ethnic state, he did not hesitate to use his historical arguments for the political aim of independence.

The study Česká otázka engendered a discussion about the foundations and interpretation of Bohemian history, which lasted till the end of the new Czechoslovak state in 1938. Many intellectuals, historians, philosophers and theologians participated in this debate, thus turning the question into a shibboleth for Czech historiography for many decades. The debate, which became known as Spor o smysl českých dějin, “The Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History,” continued in a different form during the Communist dictatorship, when it was not possible to discuss in public the res publica. Articles published abroad or in illegal magazines kept the discussion alive.

though not accessible to the general public. After the changes that followed on the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the debate resurfaced a third time and was partly determined by the search for the Czechs’ new political position within the context of today’s Europe.

Every historian studying any period of Bohemian history has to confront the debate over the meaning of this history, as no period is untouched by this question. Every new generation of historians since 1895 sees itself somehow forced to formulate its answer to the question on the Leitmotiv of Bohemian history and its relationship to the national existence and identity. In this last part of our study about Milicius de Chremsir we ask what is the “second life” of the fourteenth-century preacher or his changing image in history, especially in modern historiography. Like any historical issue, the discussion about Milicius in the last two centuries has been marked by the larger historical debate. Therefore, in this chapter we will not only analyze the views on Milicius of Palacký and his colleagues, but try to put these views into the broader context of the debate on the meaning of Czech history as well. Historians cannot satisfy themselves merely with historical facts and their explanations. They have a duty as well to study the role these facts play in the collective national memory.

1. Historiography in a Time of Nation Building

As we have seen in chapter II of this study, Milicius became an object of historiographic study soon after his death. Matthias de Janow was the first to write about him in his larger work *Regulae veteris et novi testamenti*. His biography on Milicius would become the defining authority for the greater part of Milicius’ afterlife throughout the subsequent centuries. Milicius is mentioned in many of the Hussite chronicles and calendars as a zealous preacher and priest, who worked for the sake of the church and God’s word. The more moderate sources from an Utraquist background do not depict Milicius as being in opposition to the church or Rome. Later texts, however, written by followers of the small Protestant group of the Brethren Unity or the *Unitas Fratrum* present him as the first reform preacher who dared to speak up against the Roman Catholic Church and the pope.

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The second major text we have on Milicius was put into the form of its final edition by Bohuslaus Balbinus, the famous Jesuit chronicler of the Bohemian Baroque. As we have seen in our analysis of this second biography, Balbinus’ aim was to rehabilitate Bohemia in the eyes of Europe’s Catholic orthodoxy. He did so by emphasizing the pious character of many of the important figures from Bohemian history, one of them being Milicius de Chremsir. It is worth noting that Balbinus did not have to rewrite or reformulate the story of Milicius in order to present him as a true son of the church. Already in many of the Hussite or Utraquist chronicles Milicius was characterized as a preacher who struggled for moral reform within the church. Other Catholic historians from the Baroque period continued along Balbinus’ line of thought.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Bohemia had entered an era that would fundamentally change its appearance. An important impetus for this transformation had been given by some Baroque scholars who were strong supporters of the Czech language. They emphasized the necessity of studying and cultivating the language, which would underline the specific character of Bohemia and its people. This patriotism was meaningfully strengthened by a work by Balbinus on the Czech language, *Dissertatio apologetica pro lingua slovenica, praeclique bohemia*, “Apologetical Study of the Slavonic Language, Especially Czech.” During his lifetime, publication of the book was forbidden. Finally in 1775, nearly 100 years after his death, it had its first printed edition. A more profound impetus for change came from the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which on a political level led to the rationalization and centralization of state structures. In 1781 Emperor Josef II published his *Patent of Toleration*, a package of political measures to reform and innovate society. He repealed the institute of serfdom, thus introducing a principal equality among the inhabitants of his

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country. Moreover, he ended the monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church on matters of faith by allowing other, Protestant churches to found congregations. On an academic level, the Enlightenment brought many changes, especially to the field of history. In 1783 the subject of history received its first independent statute at the University of Prague, headed by a separate chair. History as an academic subject was reformulated on the basis of profound, critical study of sources and archives. The foundation of the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences in 1790 significantly boosted support for this new approach.

One of the main scholars who adapted the spirit and methods of the Enlightenment to Bohemian history was Gelasius Dobner (1719-1790). He began a project to collect and publish documentary sources for Bohemian history. In 1795 he published six volumes of his *Monumenta historica nusquam antehac edita*, "Historical Monuments Never Edited Before." His pupils Mikuláš A. Voigt and František M. Pelcl continued with this work. The latter published the first edition of several of the great chronicles on the Bohemian Middle Ages and Reformation. Probably the most influential figure from this first phase of the movement, which was about to bring major changes to Bohemia, was Josef Dobrovský (1753-1829). He adopted the new critical methods of scholarly research for the field of biblical exegesis and Slavonic philology. Several times during his life he found himself to be in sharp opposition to church authorities because of his criticism on the subjects of piety and worship. In the historical field he devoted himself mainly to the ninth and tenth centuries of Bohemian history.

The academic developments that occurred during these last few decades of the eighteenth century announced and prepared the way for the important changes which would take place in the nineteenth century. The era became known as the *Národní obrození*, "National Revival," marking the birth of a new phenomenon in the Bohemian environment — the Czech nation. Most of the intellectual energy from this movement was concentrated in two important areas. In the first place, the period witnessed a rise in the Czech literary culture, which would continue to grow in the nineteenth century. The second *momentum* was in history and historiography, where new emphasis was placed on sources and editions that dealt with the Czech past. This resulted in the birth of a nationalistic, if not chauvinistic historiography, imposing the new paradigm of a nation on history and its research. No wonder that the more or less official name for this era, National Revival, suggests that the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century saw not the birth,
but the rebirth of the Czech nation. Periods from the history of Bohemia that could be presented as evidence of political, cultural or spiritual prosperity were emphasized and identified as the national heritage of the Czech people. In this sense the nineteenth century gave way to the birth of the modern myth of the Czech nation, which distorted much of the historical evidence.

This development also influenced the image of Milicius de Chlemsir in a profound way. The first to write about him in the new era was František Palacký, who is beyond any doubt the father of modern Czech historiography and the main historian of the National Revival. His significance to historical research and to the process of the birth of the Czech nation can hardly be overestimated. Palacký was born in Hodslavice, a village in the northeastern part of Moravia on 17 June 1798. During the Counter-Reformation, this region was a hiding place for some of the surviving members of the Unitas Fratrum. This might have been a reason for its self-proclaimed Protestant identity soon after the Patent of Toleration of 1781. The vast majority of the citizens of Hodslavice took the opportunity offered by Josef II’s new politics to leave the Catholic Church and enter the Lutheran Church, which was one of the permitted Protestant churches. František’s father was the local schoolmaster and even the main local representative for a while. During his years at the Evangelical Lyceum in Bratislava (or Pressburg, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century it was part of the Hungarian side of the monarchy) František became friends with some of the intellectuals who would be of great importance to Czech culture in the next few decades. Together with them he decided to devote himself to the Czech National Revival. In 1823 he moved to Prague and became acquainted with Dobrovský and his pupils. Soon he received a position as an archivist working in circles of the Bohemian nobility. He started some projects that were in the spirit of the Revival. In 1827 he became the first editor of two journals on Bohemian history, culture and literature, written both in German and Czech. The German Monatschrift der Gesellschaft des vaterländischen Museums in Böhmen was in print until 1831, when it was finally abandoned due to lack of readership. The Czech edition under the name Časopis společnosti vlastenského museum v Čechách became a forum for passionate

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discussions about Czech culture and still exists today in a modified form. The year 1827 was important to Palacky in another respect. He was offered the function of historiographer to the Bohemian Estates, which became a position from which he would develop many of his activities till the end of his life. He started to work on his greatest historiographic project, the *Geschichte von Böhmen grössentheils nach Urkunden und Handschriften*, which was followed by a Czech version, *Dëjiny národu českého v Čechách a na Moravě*, (History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia). The work describes the history of Bohemia and its inhabitants from the earliest ages till 1526 and is still considered a standard source of medieval and late medieval history.

Palacky’s political activities date from the revolutionary year 1848. The political structures of the absolutist Hapsburg Empire and of other European institutions were no longer able to satisfy the ambitions of the awakening nations on the continent. In April of that year, representatives of the various German groups in Central Europe met in Frankfurt to discuss the future of the nation. Palacky was also invited, but refused to attend. He explained his reasons in a letter which would became famous because of its political orientation.

I am a Czech of Slavonic blood. ... [My] nation is a small one, it is true, but from time immemorial it has been a nation of itself and existing of itself. ... The entire connection of the Czech lands with the German Reich ... must be regarded not as a bond between nation and nation but as one between ruler and ruler.

For opportune reasons, Palacky appeared to be a defender of the Hapsburg Empire seemingly arguing that the small nations in Central and Southern Europe would not be able to survive as independent states.

Assuredly, if the Austrian State had not existed for ages, in the interest of Europe and indeed of humanity itself we would have to endeavor to create it as soon as possible... If Europe is to be saved, Vienna must not sink into the role of a provincial town.

Palacky was then chosen chairman of another assembly, this time of the Slavonic Congress, which was to take place in Prague in June 1848. Unfortunately, the assembly did not have the opportunity to formulate its ideas and demands, since it was broken up by a police force under the authority of martial law, due to riots that had erupted in Prague. Despite this complicated

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5Published in five volumes between 1836 and 1867.
6The first edition was published between 1848 and 1867, also in five volumes. There have been many re-editions, the last one from 1998.
7Quoted from Zacek, p. 25 ff.
start, the Czechs were allowed to organize their own parliament, the Imperial Constituent Assembly, which officially functioned for nearly one year. The assembly met in the Moravian town of Kroměříž. It was able to publish a proposal for a new constitution of the Austrian state, based on a confederal arrangement. Palacky was one of the main authors of the text.

In the meantime, the prevailing political line at the Imperial Court in Vienna appeared to be that of a very conservative absolutism. Because of his political orientation, Palacky was forced to leave politics between 1851 and 1860. In 1861 he founded his own political party, which promoted a federal state and substantial autonomy for the Czechs. Later in his life, he became very pessimistic about a peaceful settlement of the political situation, expecting a "new Thirty Years’ War." He died in April of 1876 and would soon be called the Father of the Nation. In 1907, a statue of Palacky was finished in Prague on the embankment of the Moldau, giving concrete shape to his significance as a national symbol.

Palacky’s concept of Bohemian history was mainly based on the idea of a nation. In the Czech context it had its specific form due to contact and conflict with the German nation. In his introduction to the *History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia* he presented his basic view:

The chief content and basic feature of the whole history of Bohemia-Moravia is ... the continual association and conflict of Slavdom with Romandom and Germandom...; and as Romandom did not reach the Slavs directly, but almost entirely through the mediation of Germandom, one may therefore say that Czech history is based chiefly on a conflict with Germandom, that is on the acceptance and rejection of German customs and laws by the Czechs.

Palacky formulated the differences between the two nations in terms of aggressiveness and power. He concluded that the Slavs — and thus the Czechs — throughout history have lived in peace and acted democratically to reach their goals, whereas the Germans have used violence to oppress opposition to their power. Palacky was well aware of the violence Czechs

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8“Hlavní tedy obsah a základní tah celých dějin českomoravských jest ... ustavivé stýkání a potykaní se slovanství s římanstvím a německtvim ...; a jelikož římanství dotýkalo se Čechů ne samo sebou, ale téměř veskrze jen prostředkem německtvě, může se také říci, že české dějiny zakládají se více hlavně na sporu s Německtvem, čili na pojmání a zamítání způsobu a řádu německých od Čechů.” *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a na Moravě, I,* 1939, p. 19. The English translation is quoted from Zacek, p. 84.

9In a polemic article against his main opponent, the historian Höfler, "Die Unterschiede in der Geschichte der Deutschen und der Slawen" Palacky differentiated between "kriegerische und erobende" and "friedliche, erwerbfleissige" nations. And he went on: "Aber was ist die Eroberung Anderes, als ein im grossen Massstabe mit überlegener Gewalt durchgeführter, daher strafloser Raub? Und als solche eroberte, ursprünglich Räubervölker, werden in der Ge-
used in history as well, but he explained that they learned from the Germans to use violence as a means. In one way or another the violence that ended the most splendid era of Czech history, the Hussite movement, came from a German source. The darkest era in Czech history after 1620 had two main characteristics: Germanization and Catholization. The Hussite movement, with its criticism of hierarchic authority and abstract dogmas and its advocacy of morality and tolerance, was the first complete and enduring implementation of the ideas that later became the heart of the Reformation. In Palacky’s analyses, two enmities played a role in the development and decline of this period. Both the confrontation between the German and Czech nations and the one between Catholicism and Protestantism are the foundation of his philosophy of Czech history. Between these two conflicts, the first one seems to have been more important to Palacky. He understood his first duty to be in formulating, for the first time in modern history, the concept of his nation by telling its history.

The discussion about Milicius de Chremsir in historiography over the last two centuries is determined by the Czech National Revival and especially Palacky’s contribution to it. In 1846 Palacky published his study *Die Vorläufer des Husitenthums in Böhmen* on Conradus de Waldhausen, Milicius de Chremsir, Matthias de Janow and Johannes Sczekna. In his introduction to the first essay on Conradus he wrote:

Together with Milicius de Chremsir he was among the first Czech preachers who exerted themselves zealously for better morals for all Christianity, especially that of the clergy. Not only were they prosecuted by many enemies already during their lifetimes, but also after their life they were considered and counted as forerunners of the main Czech reformer, Master Johannes Hus.
As for Conradus, he stated that the preacher’s ideas did not concern the teachings of the church, but the moral life of it, which he tried to correct.

Palacky devoted his second essay to Milicius, whose significance he declared to be even bigger than that of Conradus:

An even greater name and greater merits than Conradus attained were gained by another priest and preacher in Prague from that age, Milicius de Chremsir, who, however, had to also suffer greater enmity.14

After this remark, Palacky went on to tell the story of Milicius’ life from the two biographies.15 That Milicius’ efforts had a bigger effect on people than Conradus’ is one of the few conclusive remarks Palacky made about Milicius. Otherwise, he mainly stuck to the facts from his sources, concentrating on the Antichrist episode and the foundation of the Jerusalem house. In Palacky’s view, the opposition Milicius met among the Prague clergy was a natural consequence of the preacher’s strong criticism of the religious. Palacky recognizes in his work that Milicius was acquitted in Avignon of the charges the clergy brought against him. To Palacky, however, Milicius was not the most significant figure of the so-called predecessors of Hus, but rather Matthias de Janow.16 In the third essay of the study from 1842, Palacky provides no specific reason for this ranking, but from the text it seems that he was mainly impressed by Matthias’ intellectual abilities. According to Palacky, Matthias might have been the first to systematically criticize not only the moral life of the church, but also its teachings. In the essay, Palacky extensively quotes from Matthias’ oeuvre.

In his main work, the History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia, Palacky mentions the pre-Hussite reform movement in the eleventh book in the series, which is about Hussitism and its beginnings. Here the reform efforts from the Middle Ages till today are presented as a resistance movement, which

took away from the medieval church the absolute reign over the human spirit, forced it to acknowledge other and higher authorities besides itself, and gave to the nations for the first time
the possibility to engage themselves in decisions about world affairs with their own, independ­
et voice. This conflict and struggle endures till today."}

In the context of his introduction to Hussitism, Palacky depicts the con­
flict in the context of the confrontation between Protestantism and Catholi­
cism. The latter is the authoritarian form of Christianity, which he says
opposes freedom for the human mind. Protestantism, on the other hand,
emphasizes the moral dimension of the Christian faith, which is the central
message of Christ. The conflict in the context of Bohemia had one other
specific feature. Palacky distinguishes between two types of criticism of the
Roman Catholic Church’s absolute claim on authority. In the first place
there was the Western approach of the Waldensian movement or St. Francis
of Assisi, which tried to change the practical life of the church, but not the
teachings as such. The other type of criticism came from the Eastern
Church, which separated from the Roman Catholic Church because it
considered its teachings wrong and dangerous. This Christianity was
brought to Bohemia by Cyril and Methodius, thus imputing an element of
otherness into Bohemian Christianity, which would remain for ever. Even
when Bohemia came under the authority of Rome in the course of history,
there were always people who were guided by other leading, spiritual forces
than that of the Roman Catholic Church.18

This idea of a different, non-Roman force in the history of Bohemia is
decisive to Palacky and his understanding of the roots of the Hussite move­
ment. Though there might have been some influences from Waldensians and
other heretic movements on the developments in Bohemia, the foundation
was based on different historical circumstances:

It is no less certain that this great movement of the spirit, the religious unrest and storms, which
were the main content of history in the fifteenth century and which changed profoundly every
appearance of Czech affairs, did not have its origin in any medieval sect, neither in the
Waldensian nor in the Cathar, but it came forward and developed from its own reasons and
seed, in the beginning insignificant to the eye, but with time it acquires greater genuineness and
importance. It was the idea of the Christian life in conflict and struggle with the adversary of
the real life that gave no satisfaction to the deeply pious heart of the old Czechs, which always
led them to new attempts to realize it in human society.19

17Odpor “odnal cirkvi stredovëké absolutnf vlâdu nad duchem lidskjfai, donutil ji k uznání
moci jiné a vyšši mimo sebe, a zjednal národûm po prvé možnosti vkládati se do rozhodnutí
osudû svëtových vlastním a samostatnûm hlasem svym. Spor a zâpas tu počavûf trvû i podnes.”
Dèjiny, III, p. 9.
18Dèjiny, III, p. 15.
19Aväšak neménë jisté jest, že ono veliké hnutí duchû, ony nepokoje a bouře nabozenské,
které v XV. stoletì činí hlavnì obsah déjin a proménily podstatné tvárnost vëcí českých, nebraly
The Czech reform movement had its own roots, which were independent from Western heresies or reform efforts, since the foundation of Christianity in Bohemia had come from a different religious region. The drive for a real Christian life came from the Eastern origins of Bohemia’s spirituality. This was manifested in the efforts of Bishop Johannes de Dražic and Arnestus de Pardubicz, who both encountered opposition from the mendicant orders. It was also the reason for the success of Conradus de Waldhausen, whose example was followed by Milicius de Chremsir. The ideas of both preachers might have been the same, but, according to Palacky, Milicius had a different spirit. Milicius used a different vocabulary than the German Conradus since he preached in Czech. According to Palacky, Czech preachers had a special kind of clarity and true naturalness, which because of its mystical and apocalyptic colors affected the audience’s emotions and imagination. Milicius’ spirituality had a specific Czech character, which made it different from Conradus’ German approach. The roots of the Bohemian Reformation had, in the words of Palacky, an element of national determination. In his conclusion about the work of Milicius, he again made this point, which would influence scholarly research on the preacher for the next century. Milicius’ image awakened:

a great and lasting force in the Czech nation. In his personality came forward the freshness of emotion and imagination, the deep but somewhat suffering piety, the fresh mildness and the tough decisiveness, by which this nation is for ever characterized; therefore it was him who, supported by the favor of the highest secular and spiritual offices, was moved by this national spirit to its deepest profundity and for the first time brought it to a motion similar to the waves of the sea, from where a storm came forward as never heard before, when other elements were mixed with it. His power was especially manifest in his convincing words and immediate acts; his writings, however, that bear the obvious signs of haste, do not have this vigor and vitality that could assure them lasting significance, except in some places.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^\text{20}\)Dejiny, III. p. 17.

\(^\text{21}\)Zjevení se jeho ... provozovalo v národu českém moc velikou a trvalou. V osobě jeho zajisté byla se takrka vtělila ona jarota citu i obraznosti, ona hluboká nábožnost, ale poněkud boleslnína, ona číla jemnost i urputná odhodlanost, jimiž národ řečený od jakživa se vyznámal; a protož on to byl, jenž podporován jsa příznì nejvyšších úřadů světských i duchovních, hnut úhmo duchem národním až v samé hloubi jeho a uvedl jej ponejprve do ševelení onoho, podobného vlnám mořským, z něhož, když se přimíšili jste živělých jiní, vyvinula se později bouře neslychaná. Moc jeho jevila se zvláště důraznými slovy a bezprostředními skutky; naproti tomu spisy jeho, nesoucí na sobě patrné známky kvapu, nemají do sebe té různosti a
Palacky related Milicius' life and work to a spirituality specific to the Czech nation, distinguishing it from other reform ideas of a German or Italian background. His piety was "Czech made," independent from sources of a German or Catholic type. It was this national element that made Milicius unique and different. This view would be presented more extensively by the first monograph on Milicius published in 1924 and is still present in some of the latest studies on the preacher.

In a certain sense, Palacky's view on Milicius was also accepted by this "Father of the Nation's" main German antagonist, Constantin Höfler (1811-1897). Höfler represented exactly the opposite of Palacky's background as he originated from German Bavaria and a strongly Catholic family. In 1851 he came to Prague on the invitation of the Minister of Education and Culture Leopold Lev Thun-Hohenstein to teach history at Prague University. As a pedagogue, he had a good reputation among both German and Czech colleagues. Höfler became the spokesman of the large German minority in Bohemia and Moravia, which still enjoyed many privileges in the second half of the nineteenth century since the country's administration was organized from Vienna. In 1846 on the territory of the present Czech Republic there lived about 2,4 million inhabitants of German nationality according to a census taken that year. This made up about thirty six percent of the total population. In 1880 the number of Germans increased to more than half a million, but their proportion to the total population remained about the same. They lived mainly in the border areas of the country, today known as the Sudeten Lands.

Höfler soon made initiatives to concentrate and organize German historiography on Bohemian history, founding the "Verein für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen" in 1862. This society was a reaction to the increase of Czech nationalistic historiography, as Höfler said in his first speech at the

jadností, málo míst vyjímající, která by jedině jim pojištění mohla stálou důležitost.” Dějiny, III, p. 25.


23For the statistics see Kořalka, p. 138 ff. The numbers do not include the Jewish inhabitants (about two percent), who mostly registered themselves as using German as their first language. In Bohemia the nineteenth century saw a change in this respect due to the assimilation of many Jews to the Czech environment.
occasion of the foundation of the Verein. Since it was a time when all nations were mobilizing their history to use it as a weapon in their struggle for their own future, the Bohemian Germans had to do the same, he pronounced. Due to this approach, he clashed in the course of his scholarly work, as would be expected, with the protagonist of the new Czech historiography, Palacky. When he began publishing his edition of the chronicles of the Hussite movement *Geschichtsschreiber der husitischen Bewegung in Böhmern, I-III* in 1856, he still evaluated Palacky positively. In his later work, however, he changed his view and criticized strongly the orientation of his Czech colleague. He even projected his rejection of Czech nationalistic historiography on Bohemian history itself, condemning the Hussite movement because of its allegedly nationalistic nature and rejecting the idea that Hus' teachings had any originality. In reaction to this in 1868 Palacky published a polemic "Streitschrift" *Die Geschichte Husitentums und Prof. Constantin Höfler.*

The *Concilia Pragensia* of 1862 offers perfect insight into Höfler's ideas concerning the pre-Hussite period. In the introduction of this edition, Höfler briefly surveys the developments in the Bohemian church of the fourteenth century. The events in Bohemia were very much linked to the "Deutsche Reich," as Höfler called the Roman Empire. The reason for this was not any kind of pressure or imperialism from the side of the Germans, but the orientation of the Czechs themselves toward the West, which was already apparent in the politics of the first Przemyslids. The establishment of a royal house itself, acknowledged by the emperor, was an implementation of a concept of German origin. The election of Charles IV, king of Bohemia, was a confirmation of this orientation toward Western Europe.

Höfler emphasized very much the efforts of Arnestus de Pardubicz, the first archbishop of Prague and, later as a cardinal, a candidate to the papacy. Arnestus put very much energy into reforming the moral life of the clergy and in fighting vestiges of paganism and heresy in his diocese. One of his methods was through instruction of the clergy. He called together synods to discuss how to reach his aims of reform. According to Höfler these synods — documents from which he edited — had a significant place in the life of the Bohemian church. He did not hesitate to pronounce them of greater importance than the activities of Milicius, Conradus and others whose works he said had been overestimated. The main problem according to him was that there was no knowledge of these instructive meetings that Arnestus held:
Und dies ist denn auch der Grund, weshalb die Tätigkeit einzelner Männer wie Konrad Waldhauser, Milič und anderer so oft von denen, welche über die husitische Zeit geschrieben haben, überschätzt wurde. Ja freilich, wären sie im verderbten Zeitalter allein dastanden als diejenigen, welche das Bessere, eine gründliche Heilung der Uibel der Zeit erstrebten, so verdienten sie ungeachtet ihrer eigenen Ausschreitungen und Sonderbarkeiten das gespendete Lob. Anders aber wird sich nothwendig die Auffassung gestalten, wenn sich zeigt, dass die eigentlichen Wächter für Sitte und Ordnung, die Erzbischöfe Böhmens, nicht schließen, nicht die Hände in den Schooss legten der beginnenden Wasserfluth ruhig zuschauten, sondern fortwährend jene Mittel der Abhilfe ergriffen, in welchen man in die schwersten Zeiten Hilfe und Rettung gesucht und gefunden. Man wird eben deshalb in Betreff der inneren Gründe der Entstehung des Husitismus weniger die Verderbtheit des Clerus als die gesteigerte Überschwenglichkeit, den Überreiz religiösen Gefühles, das unter Führern wie Milič über seine Ziele krankhaft hinausstrebte und einem falschen Mysticismus huldigte, annehmen müssen.

As a Catholic historian, Höfler felt the need to defend the church and its authorities by pointing out the purifying mechanisms and reform efforts begun by the archbishop. The church itself was able to provide an answer to the questions of the age. The answer formulated by Miličius and his fellow preachers were exaggerated and lacked loyalty to the church. No wonder Höfler’s general judgment of Miličius was very critical and rejected the very nature of the medieval preacher’s reform movement. Already Conradus had severely criticized the clergy, but he had still maintained a certain amount of reasonableness. Miličius had lost all contact with the church and its needs and simply strove after his own visions and austere, sectarian spirituality:


Miličius’ radicalism was of the same nature as that of the fraticelli who denied the right of Christians and of the church to own property. As a consequence of his fundamentalism, Milicius found himself in a position of isolation when he finally died in an Avignones prison, expelled from his

Höfler, p. XIX ff.

Höfler, p. XXXII.
Höfler considers Milicius to have been the main domestic source of the Hussite movement, due to his spirituality that emphasized personal enlightenment:

...so bleibt er doch als die eigentliche (einheimische) Quelle, aus welcher der Husitismus sich erhob und seinen vorherrschend individuellen Character annahm, immer von grosser historischer Bedeutung, der Reinheit seines Willens nach eine höchst achtbare Erscheinung.  

It might be a surprise to some that Höfler and his Czech opponent Palacky had basically the same view of Milicius. Palacky stressed the originality of his spirituality, which he believed was rooted in an independent, distinctly Czech segment of history. The core of Milicius' ideas did not come from any Catholic or German tradition, according to him, but had its own source, which was also the origin of the Czech national spirit. In the eyes of the Czech nationalist historian, whose primary interest was the nation and the building of it, this necessarily was a highly positive aspect of Milicius' persona. To Palacky, the growing awareness of the existence of a Czech nation in the nineteenth century was the main criterion for understanding and evaluating history. In the end, history became the justification for current political aims.

Höfler, although both a Catholic and a German, also observed this same growing awareness of the Czechs. He stood, however, in the opposite position from Palacky and feared the changes emerging out of the awakening Czech nationalism. To him many of the Czech political claims were radical and lacking any sense of reason. As did his Czech antagonist, he projected his perspective on the Czech efforts onto his interpretation of historical events, in this case those of the fourteenth century. He also saw in Milicius a prototype of Czech nationalist efforts, which led him to reject the preacher because of his austerity and sectarianism. He understood Czech efforts to gain an independent and equal place next to the Germans in Bohemia as an attempt to dissolve the larger community of the empire, the church and even Europe. In Milicius' work, he saw a parallel to this striving, and saw in the preacher a narrow concern for only his own immediate community. In Höfler's mind, the ideas of Milicius and Czech nationalism could only bring schism and separation.

The consensus the German and Czech historians reached on Milicius, which is simultaneously a decisive difference, is first and foremost a manifestation of the inability of opponents in a situation of nationalism to find a...

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26 Höfler, p. XXXIV.
common ground. Even when Palacký and Höfler agreed on the significance of Milicius de Chremsir, they were completely divided in their evaluation of this significance. Contemporary loyalties to the Czech and the German political causes prevailed over their professional capabilities. In this case, history became the victim of an ideology that needed support from historical myths, which pretended to be self-evident. Palacký and Höfler did not discuss their methods and approach to history in their works, but only presented their analyses. Ideology dictated history, thus widening an already unbridgeable gap between two very competent scholars of history. This is the problem that Ernest Gellner identified in his study on nationalism when he spoke about the "pervasive false consciousness of nationalism."

Nationalism tends to treat itself as a manifest and self-evident principle, accessible as such to all men and violated only through some perverse blindness, when in fact it owes its plausibility and compelling nature only to a very special set of circumstances, which do indeed obtain, but which were alien to most of humanity and history.\(^\text{27}\)

The only real surprise in the conflict between Palacký and Höfler is the choice of the latter to basically accept the "Czech made" perspective on Milicius. Höfler was familiar with Balbinus’ biography of Milicius, which considered him a good, orthodox and very pious Catholic who deserved to be canonized by the church. Höfler could easily have taken this image from Balbinus and formed his own picture of Milicius that did not contain any nationalist features. It is difficult to find precise reasons for this choice. The pressure and influence of both Czech and German nationalism might have prevented him from taking this step. The appropriation of Milicius by one side may have disabled the other side from formulating an independent position on the historical figure. History had become an instrument for both sides for realizing political ambitions. Höfler had to defend his own community by rejecting the symbols and myths of the other side. Paradoxically, he only confirmed the myth of his opponents through his very rejection.

The conflict between Palacký and Höfler established the parameters of the historiographic debate about Milicius for a long time. Höfler found a successor in Konrad Burdach, who in 1891 published a study on manuscripts, in which he also mentioned some of the pre-Hussite preachers like Milicius.\(^\text{28}\) He called Milicius a sectarian apocalyptic, whose efforts de facto


destroyed the social and church reforms of Charles IV and Arnestus de Pardubicz. He accuses the preacher of zealously criticizing the church as such, the veneration of holy relics, scholarly study etc. His sermons were, according to Burdach, full of hatred against non-Czech elements in society and church, a feature which reached its climax during the Hussite wars against the rest of Europe. Burdach radicalized Höfler’s ideas about the nationalist conflict between the Germans and the Czechs in history, pushing the Czechs into a minority position that was isolated from the rest of the Europe.

Milicius was not only criticized by German historiography, but also appreciated. Scholars from Protestant backgrounds viewed him as a predecessor of the Reformation. Gotthard Viktor Lechler, professor at Leipzig university, emphasized the role of Milicius’ apocalyptic views in the radical Taborite wing of the Hussite movement. Lechler did not pay attention to the nationalist tendencies in Höfler’s or Palacky’s work, but concentrated on the theological and religious dimensions of the preacher’s significance. Another German scholar found reasons as well to accept Milicius. Johann Loserth (1846-1936), historian at the universities of Czernowitz and Graz, regarded him as a representative of the mystic movement, the aim of which was to reform the church from inside. In his eyes, Milicius’ moral effort was an important contribution to the life of the church and an attempt to find new directions in a time of crisis.

On the Czech side, the last quarter of the nineteenth century brought many new editions of documents and works on Bohemian history. In 1873 Josef Emler (1836-1899), a pupil of Palacky, started his grand edition Fontes rerum Bohemicarum, “Sources for Bohemian History”, which is still today the main collection of chronicles, vitae and other documents. The last, fifth volume was published in 1893. The first volume contained documents from the era of Charles IV, among them being the two biographies on Milicius. Another important edition on Milicius was published by František Menčík in 1890. He edited Milicius’ letter to Urban V and his Libellus de Antichristo. The last document together with one biography was published again in the third volume of the Regulae veteris et novi testamenti of Matthias de Janow, edited by Vlastimil Kybal in 1911. At the beginning of

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the twentieth century, researchers on Milicius had only a few writings at their disposal, which basically confirmed Palacký’s idea of a preacher who deviated from the orthodox Catholic way and advocated a strongly moral, eschatological and Bohemian Reformation. The *Libellus* together with the biography by Matthias de Janow gave the impression that Milicius was in strong opposition to the authorities of both church and society. The more moderate *Vita* and the letter to Urban V, which lack larger apocalyptic images, were incapable of tempering this image of Milicius, as we can see from the first monograph about Milicius, which appeared in 1911.

The first phase of the Palacký-dominated historiography on Hus and the pre-Hussite preachers reached its climax in František Loskot’s study on Milicius, published in 1911. Loskot (1870-1932) was one of many Czechs who left the Roman Catholic Church in protest against its alleged anti-Czech character. He studied Catholic theology and became a teacher of religion at a secondary school. He changed his job for a position at a newspaper and became a popular journalist. His spiritual journey ended in the community of the Free Spirit after associations with other groups and churches. Between 1909 and 1912 he published three monographs on the three main pre-Hussite preachers Conradus, Milicius and Matthias. The studies, though of a scholarly quality, contain a strong aversion to the Roman Catholic Church and the Hapsburg Empire.

Loskot’s characterization of Milicius is a grand eulogy of the preacher’s Czech features and his moral struggle, which placed him outside the church.

1Many citizens with a Czech nationality left the Roman Catholic Church between 1910 and 1920. This movement acquired the name “Los von Rom” and was not only a Czech phenomenon. In several European countries the idea of a national church connected to the national cause and state was strong. In Bohemia the movements had its sympathizers mainly among intellectuals. The leading personalities of the National Revival of the nineteenth century were members of the Lutheran or Reformed Church. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk for example left the Roman Catholic Church to enter the Reformed Church in 1880. Till about 1910 more than ninety five percent of the Czech population in the country belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. Among the German inhabitants the percentage was even higher. In Prague - where the changes were without a doubt more radical than in the countryside - the Catholic Church lost between 1910 and 1921 more than a third of its members. These people went partly to a new, national church or to the Evangelical Church (a junction of the Lutherans and the Reformed from 1918). The majority did not join any church at all and considered themselves atheists. See for this Jan Havránek, Sociální struktura pražských Němců a Čechů, křesťan a židů ve světle statistik z let 1890-1930, in: Český časopis historický, 1995/3 [The social structure of the Prague Germans and Czechs, Christians and Jews in the light of statistics from 1890-1930, in: Czech Historical Review], p. 470-480; and Kofalka, p. 86 ff.

He called him “the Father of the Bohemian (Czech) Reformation,” distinguishing him from Conradus de Waldhausen, whom he claimed was nothing more than a predecessor of Johannes Hus. He characterizes Conradus as a scholastic preacher, who in his sermons only appealed to the mind in order to reach the soul. Milicius on the other hand:

...was a mystic, a man of inspiration, who was able to communicate the impressions of his soul to others in an admirable way. (...) Waldhauser was a foreigner, German: in Milicius the listeners felt something congenial, the Czech soul. By this we explain the mystery why Milicius was able to evoke a wave in the Czech soul, which soon would explode in an enormous storm and which would not calm down for ages.

Milicius is viewed as the first person to give basic direction to what would become the Bohemian Reformation. The vocabulary of Loskot makes is clear that he not only continued along the lines of Palacky, but he even popularized his ideas. Loskot’s analysis of Milicius is to a large extent a vulgarization of Palacky due to its polemic and self-complacent tone:

Milicius is a Czech human being by birth, his nature, his labor, his idea of Christianity and life, even when he considered himself strictly orthodox and by others’ was regarded as such. (...) It is the purely Czech soul of Milicius that primarily explains why the efforts of Milicius found such resonance in the Czech nation. Milicius is a direct incarnation of the Czech spirit and this circumstance made him under the given conditions the Father of the Bohemian [Czech] Reformation.

The Hussite movement or Bohemian Reformation of the fifteenth century was in the eyes of Loskot not just a protest against the corruption of the church, stimulated by some outside ideas like those of Wyclif and others. In Loskot’s analysis, the Bohemian Reformation (as he and many Czech historians called and still call the reform movement of Hus and his followers in an attempt to distinguish it from the European Reformation of Luther and Calvin) was

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Waldhauser byl scholastik a jeho operace pohybují se především v oblasti rozumu. Rozumem se chtět dostat k srdci. Mílič byl mystik, muž inspirace, jenž dovedl podivuhodným způsobem dojmy své duše sdělit s jinými. (...) Waldhauser byl cizinec, Němec: v Milčovi cítili poslušači coži spřízněného, českou duší. Tím vysvětlíme si tajemství, proč se podařilo Míličovi vyvolat v duši české vládě, které se mělo brzo rozpoutat v ohromnou bouři a které nemělo se stísnit ani po staletích.” Loskot, p. 31.

Mílič jest český šlechtu svým narozením, svou bytostí, svým působením, svým pojetím křesťanství i životu přes to, že sám sebe považoval za přesně orthodoxního a že od jiných za takového byl považován. (...) Jest to roze česká duše Milčova, která především vysvětuje, proč působení Milčova nalezlo takovou ozvěnu v českém národě. Mílič, tot přímo inkarnace českého ducha, a tato okolnost jej učinila v daných poměrech otcem české reformace.” Loskot, p. 7 ff.
an elementary opposition of the Czech spirit against the Roman Catholic Church, against the
Christianity, which the Czech person saw being practiced in life within the church and by the
church, and finally also against the ecclesiastically Christian culture, especially in the social
sphere.\textsuperscript{35}

Loskot plainly projected the anti-Catholic mentality of his day onto the
events of the fourteenth century, which was to him the cradle of the Bohemian Reformation and the Czech nation as such.

The Bohemian Reformation, its nature and goals, just like the circumstances under which it was
born, makes evident that the Czechs never became fully a Roman-Catholic nation. They had
only the outer paint of Catholicism, maybe even beautiful, which is able to confuse a scholar
who is not penetrating far enough. (...) The church distinguishes itself by dogmatic fanaticism,
unlike the Czechs who placed the main stress on morality and who view heresy not only in
theoretical aberrations of the faith and its doctrine, but also and foremost in the transgression of
moral norms. To them a heretic is not so much an erring spirit but more a simoniac, a usurer, a
vicious man.\textsuperscript{36}

Because of his orientation toward reform, which was inspired by the
Czech spirit, Milicius was bound to be in opposition to the church, even
when he regarded himself to be orthodox. The Czech nature of his deeds
brought him into conflict with the foreign, international and anti-Czech
ecclesiastical structure. The Reformation, following in his tracks, was
inevitably declared heretical since its nature, which found its beginnings
with Milicius, was non-ecclesiastical, Loskot writes. The Czech mentality
cannot partake in a Catholic structure, since it is fundamentally foreign to
the Czech spirit. As he was fierily propagating Czech nationalism, Loskot
saw a definitive difference between the two types of Christianity, one
tending toward dictatorship, the other toward practical morality. A few years
after the publication of his book, the old Hapsburg world was torn apart by
the forces Loskot supported in his Czech environment. Loskot used the
history of the church and of Milicius in particular as a heavy weapon against
those whom he regarded as the enemies of the Czech struggle for a kind of
independence.

\textsuperscript{35}[The Bohemian Reformation ment a] “živelní opposici českého ducha proti církvi římské,
proti křesťanství, jak je český člověk viděl uváděti v život v církví a církví, a konec konců i
proti církevně křesťanské kultuře, zvláště v oboru sociálním.” Loskot, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{36}Česká reformace, její podstata i cíle, jakož i okolnosti, za nichž se rodila, dokazují, že
nímecký římsko-katolický se Čechové plně nestali nikdy. Měli pouze zevnější nátlak katoli-
cismu, třeba skvělý, jenž je s to, aby zmátil bádacele a nedostí pronikavého. (...) Církev se
vyznává fanaticismem dogmatickým, ne tak Čechové, kteří přední důraz kladou na morálku
a kacifství vidí nejen v theoretických uchylkách od víry a dogmatu, ale také, a to především
v přestupování norem mravních. Kacířem jest jinm ne tak bludač, jako svatoukupec, lichvář,
člověk neřestný.” Loskot, p. 9.
Shortly after Loskot’s book appeared, a large study was published about Johannes Hus by Jan Sedláčk (1871-1925), a Catholic professor of theology in Brno.\textsuperscript{37} To a certain extent, this work can be regarded as a Catholic response to the ideas expressed by many Czech intellectuals such as Loskot. His approach can be compared with that of Loserth, who emphasized Milíčius’ genuine and orthodox efforts for church reform. Sedláčk rejected the view of Palacký and his followers that Hus had taken his fundamental inspiration only from domestic traditions of a Slavonic character and from his predecessors like Milíčius and Matthias. In the beginning, Hus was basically just another zealous preacher in favor of church reform, but he abandoned orthodox teachings when he came into contact with the ideas of Wyclif. Foreign influence from England turned him into a heretic, who was rightly denounced by the church. The implication of this approach, of course, is that the Czech tradition itself, as demonstrated by Milíčius and his fellow preachers, was fully within the bounds of Catholic orthodoxy. Milíčius had some ideas about eschatology and Antichrist that were almost aberrant, but the verdict of the process in 1374 showed clearly that he was by no means a heretic.\textsuperscript{38}

The year 1924 was the 550th anniversary of Milíčius’ death in Avignon, which resulted in several publications about the preacher. The main study that year was made by the young historian Otakar Odložilšek (1899-1973),\textsuperscript{39} who devoted himself in the initial years of his work to detailed research on the period of Hus and the Bohemian Brethren. He presented Milíčius as a critic of church corruption who did not want to leave the church. He and his successors Hus and Jacobellus de Misa (or Jakoubek ze Stříbra) wanted to reform the church from inside, in accordance with the claims of truth. Milíčius was a witness to the truth in a time when the church preferred secular power and outward pomp. He tried to restore the church to its original vocation in the world through his preaching and his activities in the social field. He was still accepted by the church as an orthodox preacher, and accusations of heresy were denied by the papal inquisition. Despite this, his followers were persecuted and his legacy, the house Jerusalem, was closed down. This kind of reform effort was not tolerated by the church because of its implications, which was also the case of Johannes Hus’


\textsuperscript{38} Sedláčk, p. 67 ff. and 370.

\textsuperscript{39} Otakar Odložilšek, \textit{Jan Milíč z Kroměříže}, Praha 1924.
proposed reforms. According to Odložilík Milicius was rightly called “the Father of the Bohemian (Czech) Reformation,” because he and Matthias de Janow publicized the errors of the church, while Hus and his fellow preachers went on in this direction and started indeed to break down Babylon. In many regards, Odložilík agreed with Loskot, except he did not share the nationalist bias of the latter. Odložilík never describes Milicius as being a representative of the Czech nation or national idea, but views him simply as a reformer of the life of the church and society.

2. The Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History

Loskot, Sedláček and Odložilík published their works on Milicius and the other pre-Hussite preachers in a time dominated by grandiose discussions about the political future of Central Europe. To many it was obvious that the arrangement of the Hapsburg Empire, still fairly centralized and dominated by the German-speaking part of its inhabitants, had to be seriously reformed. Soon, however, it would be too late for such efforts. One of the debates that arose in the Czech environment during this era had a historiographic character and became generally known by the name Spor o smysl českých dějin, “The Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History.” It can be briefly described as a controversy over the identity of the Czech nation lasting from 1895 until 1938. Practically all Czech historians, philosophers and theologians of this time participated in one way or another in the debate, in which Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Josef Pekař were the two main antagonists. Even today the controversy plays a certain role in Czech historiography and philosophy, as many scholars still feel the need to answer the question: what is the Czech identity?

The dispute had its clear beginnings when Masaryk published his book Česká otázka, “The Czech Question” in 1895. Masaryk was born from a Slovak-German family living in the Moravian town Hodonín on 7 March

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41 A collection of the main contributions to “The Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History” has been edited by Miloš Havelka, Spor o smysl českých dějin 1895-1938, Praha 1995. See also Martin Kučera, Pekař proti Masarykově [Pekař versus Masaryk], Praha 1995.
42 The full title is Česká otázka, snahy a úžby národního obrození [The Czech Question, the efforts and desires of the National Revival]. The book has seen quite a few reprints since 1895. Here we use the edition of 1969, published in the fall of the détente of the late sixties, known as the Prague Spring.
1850. He studied philosophy in Vienna and Leipzig, and finished his studies with a dissertation on suicide, viewing it from the context of modern society, which had lost in his eyes a unifying religious philosophy of life. Soon after, he became assistant professor at the University of Vienna. In 1882 he was awarded the position of professor at the Prague University, where he taught philosophy, logic, ethics, sociology and psychology. He became involved in the Czech national cause, which he intended to support by innovating Czech scholarship. He rejected those tendencies in Czech nationalistic historiography to rewrite history even by falsifying documents. In the second half of the 1880's, he became one of the few critics who denounced two falsified documents, which resulted in the so-called “Battle of the Manuscripts.” In 1817 and 1818 two manuscripts had appeared under the names Rukopis královédvorský, “The Queen’s Court Manuscript” and Rukopis zelenohorský, “The Green Mountain Manuscript,” supposedly dating from the thirteenth and tenth centuries respectively. Many historians, among them also Palacký, accepted these documents as genuine and regarded them as the first manuscripts written in Czech. It took more than fifty years to determine without a doubt that both writings were falsifications from the nineteenth century. Masaryk played a major role in disclosing this “historical lie of the century,” for he was convinced that the national cause could only be strengthened by substantial and critical scholarship. However, he was severely criticized for this stance by the nationalists, who denounced him as a traitor to the nation.

Masaryk also became politically involved. From 1900 till 1914 he was the leader of a political party with a moderate, so-called realistic program. In the last seven years of the Hapsburg Empire, he was a member of the Austrian Imperial Parliament. In the course of these years he changed his position from that of a protagonist of a reformed Hapsburg Monarchy to one of a defender of Czech independence. During World War I, he lobbied in many ways for international recognition of a Czechoslovak Republic to be founded after the war and gained the support of the allied powers, especially of President Wilson of the United States of America. When the new republic

43 The main biographies on Masaryk have been written by (future) Marxists. The first one is by the historian and later Communist Minister of Education Zdeněk Nejedly: T.G. Masaryk, four volumes (about the years 1850-1886), Praha 1930-35. The second one is by Milan Machovec: T.G. Masaryk, Praha 1968. A third one - which is actually the first, since it was published even before Masaryk’s death in 1937 - is written by Masaryk’s admirer Jan Herben: T.G. Masaryk, 3 volumes, Praha 1926-27. For Masaryk’s ideas see A. van den Beld, Humanity. The Political and Social Philosophy of Thomas G. Masaryk, Den Haag 1975.
was established in 1918, Masaryk was elected its first president. He held this office until 1935, when he abdicated it at the age of 85. He died on 14 September 1937, in a time when Nazi-Germany was casting its shadows.

In his study *The Czech Question* Masaryk discussed the contents of the National Revival and drew some conclusions about the country’s political presence. History was to him a source of ideas and ideals, which motivated the Czech nation from its beginnings. In this thinking, Hus, the Hussite movement, the Bohemian Brethren, Comenius, Palacky and some others represented the finest of the Czech national tradition. Masaryk fully accepted Palacky’s idea of Czech history, which had its peaks in periods of democratic and peaceful rule. This ideal Masaryk simply called “humanity:”

*By humanity, fully and truly conceived, we join the best of our times with the past, by humanity we bridge the spiritual and moral slumber of several centuries, by humanity we have to forge ahead with human progress. Humanity is for us our national task, as it has been prepared and bequeathed to us by our Brotherhood: the ideal of humanity holds all meaning for our national life.*

In another study, published on the occasion of the hundredth birthday of Palacky in 1898, Masaryk wrote even more directly about his acceptance of this historian’s approach. He described Palacky’s idea of the Czech nation with obvious sympathy, putting his keyword “human” into the historian’s mouth:

*Durch ihren Volkscharakter sei die böhmische und slavische Nation human, sie sei geradzu die Repräsentantin des reinen Menschentums. So erklärt sich, dass unser Volk sich das erste an die Reformation wagte und durch die Reformation die bis jetzt reinste christliche Kirche begründete — seine Brüder-Unität, welche daher auch das Centrum der Ganzen historischen Entwicklung der Menschheit bildet. Die Brüder-Unität ist der Höhepunkt der historischen Entwicklung des böhmischen Volkes und der Menschheit überhaupt. In derselben offenbarte sich das eigentliche böhmische Wesen, das böhmische Menschtum.*

According to Masaryk, Hus and his Reformation represent the best of the Czech nation, even when the Hussite movement was not totally consistent. Hussite theologians taught that moral life in the church must be renewed, but they were not prepared to take the final step, i.e. to formulate a new

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doctrine. They tried to reach a compromise with church authorities and therefore lost the strength that became the heart of the Bohemian Brethren. Nevertheless, the struggle of Hus and his predecessors was a Czech struggle.

Hus and his predecessors began to preach a moral and religious renewal; they were not mainly concerned about the teachings. The whole Czech nation became involved with the reform of morals and the freedom of moral and religious conscience. Because of this moral and religious claim, Hus and the whole nation found themselves in conflict with Rome, with the highest authority in matters of the rules of living. 46

Although Masaryk's ideas may be for the greater part congruent with Palacký's views, we should be aware of an important development in the case of Masaryk. To Palacky the high points of Czech history were based on differentiation. Hus must be counted among the best of the nation because in him the nation distinguished itself from others, especially the Germans. The Czechs were at their best when there was no foreign influence, when they could just draw from their own sources of democracy and equality. Palacky glorified certain parts of the nation's history on the basis of nationalist reasoning. Masaryk was different in this respect. His approach was to base the greatness of the nation on morality and ethics. He agreed with Palacky's analysis of Czech history, but from a moral point of view. Hus was not great because he made the Czechs different from the Germans or the Catholics, but because of his moral appeal for humanity. Masaryk tried to establish the Czech movement for autonomy or independence on the basis of humanity that Hus, Comenius and others had presented. According to this approach, the nation is above all defined by its moral effort and activity, by its contribution to the greater community of nations. "Humanity," said Masaryk in the conclusion of his book, "is our last national and historical goal; humanity is the Czech program."47 Or, at the end of his study on Palacky, he calls the Bohemian idea of humanity "eine Weltidee" that concerns and determines the relationship between individuals and nations "sub specie aeternitatis." 48 The ideal of humanity, the main force in Czech history, had a metaphysical significance for all mankind. This led Masaryk necessarily to criticize Palacky's bias about German-Czech antagonism and his Slavonic

46 Hus a jeho předchůdce počinali kázat opravu mravů a náboženskou, učení se ve většině místě nedotýkali. O obnovu mravů a svobody svědomí mravního a náboženského stál celý národ český. Z tohoto mravního a náboženského požadavku Hus a národ celý dostali se do sporu s Římem, s nejvyšší autoritou ve věcech životní správy." Česká otázka, p. 223.

47 "Humanita je náš poslední cíl národní a historický, humanita je program český." Česká otázka, p. 240.

48 Palacky's Idee, p. 73; Palackého idea, p. 50.
nationalism or even attitude of superiority in moral issues. Rivalry among nations was not decisive for Masaryk, but the extent to which a nation — especially the Czech nation — paid attention to the idea of humanity:

Deshalb braucht man aber nicht sein Volk für das auserwählte und einzig auserwählte zu betrachten; die wahre Humanität wiedersetzt sich den Gegensätzen der Individuen, Classen, Staaten und Völker, der Kirchen und der Bildung. Palacky hat oft die nationalen Gegensätze, namentlich die der slavischen und germanischen Nation, mehr als die Übereinstimmungen und die verbindenden Momente betont.4

Masaryk’s view verges on a kind of messianism since he suggests that the values found in the history of the Czech nation are of a greater significance to the world. These Czech values were to him the answer to the questions of the modern world. He might not be a nationalist in the common sense of the word, but he was truly convinced of the irreplaceable moral magnitude of the giants in Czech history, among whom he included Hus, Comenius, Chelčický and some others.

The main opponent of Masaryk in the “dispute about the meaning of Czech history” was the historian Josef Pekař (1870-1937).5 He was born in a farmer’s family in a small village near to Turnov in North Bohemia, an area dominated by German-speaking citizens. He studied history at the philosophical faculty in Prague, where he became a pupil of Jaroslav Goll (1846-1929), the founder of positivist historiography in Bohemia. This orientation determined Pekař’s historical involvement. In 1897 he became an assistant professor in Austrian history, only to become professor in the same department a few years later. He held this position until the end of his life, however, the subject’s name was changed to “Czechoslovak history” in 1918. He published many studies and articles about different topics on the fifteenth up to the seventeenth century.

One of Pekař’s initial, larger reactions to Masaryk’s idea of the meaning of Czech history was published in 1912 under the title *Masarykova česká filosofie*, “Masaryk’s Czech philosophy.”51 In his eyes, Masaryk idealized history for his own cause — the Czech Revival and its political implications. To compare and identify the humanity that was present in the thinking

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4 *Palacký’s Idee*, p. 58; *Palackého idea*, p. 40.
5 About Pekař see Kutnar and Marek, p. 490 ff; Zdeněk Kalista, *Josef Pekař*, Praha 1994 (due to the political changes of the last century in Bohemia this study from 1941 could only be published fully for the first time in 1994).
51 Published in *Český časopis historický XVIII*, 1912, no. 2, p. 170-208. The article is reprinted in Havelka, p. 265-302.
and theology of the Bohemian Brethren in the sixteenth century with a modern idea of humanity influenced by Herder — according to Pekař — was historically a mistake. Masaryk used and even manipulated historical events when he drew a continuous line between Hus and the Czech Revival as if the two were motivated by the same idea and orientation. His view that the Czech nation has to continue with this movement that supposedly began in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did not respect basic historical facts and differences between the past and the current situations:

If I understand him well, then it means: I have formulated my philosophical opinion and those activities of our nation-builders that agree with it [Masaryk's theory], I select. The rest of it that I cannot use, I ignore. (...) And we understand very well how Masaryk easily found the genealogy of his spiritual predecessors, the gallery of his ancestors in Czech history. We understand how the family tree was founded: Hus, Chelčík, Komenský, Dobrovský, Kollár, Šafařík, Palacký, Havlíček, Masaryk... Masaryk did not start from the objective reality of those figures (about whom we are taught only by what Masaryk calls historical empiricism, i.e. the method which creates an image of a person on the basis of critically researched data about him or about his conditionality or context within contemporary lines of development to which he belongs), but he started from himself and looked for himself in the traditions of the past. That means that he looked only for congenial or similar or apparently similar sides.

To Pekař, the ideas of Masaryk and his disciples were unhistoric since they did not comprehend that there is an unbridgeable difference between the Czechs of the late Middle Ages and those of the nineteenth century.

The paper Masarykova česká filosofie was mainly a reaction to some offensive statements against Pekař and his teacher Jaroslav Goll made by two followers of Masaryk. Pekař's analysis of Masaryk's paradigm in this article was still short and did not deliver a broader presentation of his own philosophy of history. Some years later, Pekař published a study that can be regarded as his main response to the ideas of Masaryk's Česká otázka. The text, which was entitled Smysl českých dějin, "The meaning of Czech

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32 Rozumím-li dobře, znamená to: utvořil jsem si svůj názor filosofický a co se v projevech našich budítek s ním shodovalo, to jsem z nich vybral. Ostatek, co se mi nehodilo, jsem ignoroval. (...) A porozumíme výběrné, jak se stalo, že Masaryk tak snadno nalezl genealogii svých duševních předchůdců, galerii svých předků v českých dějinách. Porozumíme, jak vznikl rodokmen: Hus, Chelčík, Komenský, Dobrovský, Kollár, Šafařík, Palacký, Havlíček, Masaryk... Masaryk totiž nevyšel od objektivní reality téhož postav (o které nás může poučit pouze to, co Masaryk zve historickým empirismem, tj. metoda, která si tvorí obraz osobnosti na základě kriticky vyšetřených všestranných dat o ní i o její podmíněnosti nebo souvislosti se soudobými linii vyvojovými, do nichž náleží), nýbrž vyšel od sebe a sebe hledal v tradičních minulostech. Hledal, rozumí se, jen stránky příbuzné nebo podobné nebo zdánlivě podobné." Pekař, Masarykova česká filosofie, in: Havelka, p. 291-2 (italics by Pekař).

33 There were quite a few of them, who often in a popularizing way spread the views of Masaryk, while ignoring basic principals of scientific research and discussion. To name just two of them: Jan Herben, Jindřich Vancura.
history," was written as a lecture and printed a year later in 1929. We have to consider that this was quite a different period from 1912, since it was about ten years after the foundation of the new state, the Czechoslovak Republic. The new political situation was much in favor of the founder of the state Masaryk, whose ideas and authority were at that point widely respected. In the eyes of many, Masaryk's "Czech philosophy" had given birth to a new era of independence and national pride, which led to an outburst of energy in many social fields. The cultural, political and scientific efforts of the so-called First Republic were considerable, even though many issues concerning the relationship of the Czechs to their neighbors, as reflected in the status of the German minority and in the tone of the new official historiography, were unresolved. Masaryk's prestige could not be shattered now. It might not have been gratifying to write a study criticizing the self-images of those who were currently victorious.

Pekař opened his study by stating his doubt that history alone could possibly have some meaning. To him Masaryk's idea that the Czech nation and with it Czech history bore a certain thought or philosophy was unacceptable. Empirical historiography cannot use arguments from the fields of metaphysics or religion, which is exactly what Masaryk did in his concept of history. To Pekař the meaning of history could only be understood in terms of "collecting knowledge about the main factors of historical development and the explanation of the contexts formed by them."

Pekař had an opposite stance here from František Palacky. In the thinking of the latter, the main factor that can make the history of Bohemia into Czech history is the distinctiveness of the Slavonic people in general and of the Czechs in particular. Their culture was more developed than that of their Western neighbors, meaning foremost the Germans. The relationship between Bohemia and Europe was dominated by an animosity between those who uphold freedom and peace on the one hand and those who support violence and aggression on the other. This concept Pekař utterly denounced. From the Middle Ages to modern times, the historical developments in Bohemia on every level were fundamentally determined by European influences. The Czechs adapted to outside models:

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54 Smysl českých dějin (O nový názor na české dějiny [About a New View on Czech History]) Praha 1929, reprinted in Havelka, p. 499-560.

55 "Nejde tu v podstatě o nic jiného než o poznání hlavních faktorů dějinného vývoje a výklad souvislostí jimi vytvořených." Havelka, p. 502.
Thus not only association and conflict, as is according to Palacky’s formula, but a continuous adopting, submitting, consuming the model of life and thought of the more developed neighbors of the German and Roman world is the most powerful and by far the most significant fact and factor of our history.

In this concept, the Hussite movement was not an event that confirmed the distinction of Bohemia from the rest of Europe, but it was rather proof that the Czechs were and wanted to be a part of the continent. For Pekař it was an attempt by the Czechs to give Europe a guideline for responding to the actual questions of the fifteenth century. It was not a movement that arose out of the Czech spirit and environment; on the contrary, it was a sign and result of Bohemia’s deep adherence to Europe.

Pekař wanted to make historical distinctions according to the spirit of the particular period. Every era has its own spirit, according to him, and he pointed out the distinctions from periods in art history. This approach from the Geistesgeschichte, as Pekař dubbed it, provided him with some important arguments to support his case against Masaryk. The different periods — he names the Roman, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Classicist and Romantic periods — correspond to changes in spiritual mentality, which makes each distinct from the next. It is impossible to compare the Czechs from the fifteenth century to those from the nineteenth century since they do not have the same nature. Therefore, Masaryk’s statement that the struggle of the Czechs for their national cause in the nineteenth century fulfills a journey begun with the Hussite movement is nonsense. The world between these two periods, separated from one another by many hundreds of years, has changed in the sense of its views, emotions and goals.

Some other factors that determined the historical development of Bohemia are its geographical position among mainly German-speaking states, coincidence which brings sudden changes and unexpected events and historical development itself which encourages people to act a certain way. Again Pekař pointed out the many advantages of the German influence on Bohemia, while at the same time acknowledging the dark side of the massive German presence in Bohemia. The German inhabitants brought prosperity to the country by their new agricultural and industrial technology. Pekař, however, recognized the downside illustrated in history by several

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54 “Tedy ne pouze stykání a potýkání podle formule Palackého, ale stálé přejímání, podléhání, sycení se vzorem života a myšlenky pokročilejších sousedů světa germánského a románského je nejmocnějším a daleko nejvýznamnějším faktem a faktorem našich dějin.” Havelka, p. 504.
attempts to Germanize the country. These attempts all failed because they evoked Czech nationalism, which defended its own rights and culture. Even when Pekar quite clearly refused Palacky and Masaryk’s historiographical concept, he proposed his own that connected the separate periods and developments in Bohemia into one idea. The empirical historian seemed sensitive to the idea of a national identity as well, when he declared that national awareness is the link between the past and present. When the spiritual nature and orientation, the goals and ideals of the Czechs have changed throughout the course of history:

[W]e must emphasize the reality that only one link connects those dissimilar worlds of thought and creates an uninterrupted continuity of life and will throughout the centuries — that is national awareness. Only where its voice of hope, fear, prayer or anger sounds from the distance of the past, only there can we understand and feel like sons of a national family, that we are spiritually united with generations of long extinct ancestors, only there are we fully and without differences aware that we are part of a spiritual collective living from age to coming age, traveling with the same fundamental effort: to maintain, strengthen, ennoble our individuality among the nations.  

To Pekar the meaning of history was this “national awareness,” or the main factor of the Czech historical development, as he said in the beginning of his essay. He called it even conditional to the existence of a Czech history, its reason or blood, its beating heart. Here seems to be a contradiction in Pekar’s position. On the one hand Pekar rejected Masaryk’s concept of a supernatural force that leads history toward its final goal of humanity. On the other hand, despite his very strict empiricist argumentation, the historian did not hesitate to himself use a concept based on a “supernatural” origin. Pekar’s idea that the nationalistic feeling of the nineteenth or early twentieth century was the same as the alleged national awareness during the Hussite movement is parallel to Masaryk’s idea of humanity existing among the Bohemian Brethren and centuries later during the National Revival. Just as Masaryk’s idea of humanity is very much a concept belonging to nineteenth-century idealist philosophy — as Pekar correctly noted — so too does the paradigm of national identity, which Pekar employs, have its origin in the nineteenth century. Pekar was able to reveal the origin of Masaryk’s idea,
but did not see the parallel to his own line of thought. The main difference between the two competitors was that Masaryk used his concept of history in his political program, which finally led to the founding of an independent Czechoslovakia. Pekař did not have any clear political ambitions, which might be the reason why his concept never had any political implications.

Masaryk reacted to Pekař's study with a statement written in 1928-29 — at which time he had already been president for ten years — soon after the third edition of *Smysl českých dějin.* Surprisingly, the text entitled *Masarykova česká filosofie* was never published until 1993, when it was printed in the collective oeuvre *Masarykův sborník* (vol. VIII). It has one more remarkable, somewhat alienating feature — it was written in the third person. Masaryk wrote about Masaryk, possibly indicating that he planned to publish the text under a pseudonym, but finally decided not to do so.

Masaryk rejected the accusations of Pekař, stating that his colleague did not properly understand history or historiography, while pointing out his own merits in founding the Czechoslovak state,

Masaryk appeared to perceive the historical meaning and the understanding of history not only by comprehending our national situation, but also by comprehending the situation of the world and the political utilization of it; to re-establish the Czech state (sic), to win our independence under such circumstances and by such means and to organize a new state in its constant direction as experience teaches — is not that to perceive an understanding of our and every history?58

The course of history itself had shown that Masaryk was right in his concept of the Czech nation. In a fairly polemic vocabulary, the president attacked Pekař for his idea that national awareness was the main linking element in history. It might be true that the National Revival has its primary roots in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century as Pekař said, but he did not understand that the Enlightenment itself was a consequence of the Reformation and its criticism on authoritarian Catholicism. The Reformation, which first appeared in Bohemia in the fourteenth century, led naturally to the individualism and subjectivism of Kant and the philosophers of the eighteenth century. The nature of Czech history, as it is defined by Hus and the Bohemian Reformation, is therefore religious. This religiosity is not a reference to a metaphysical level that might be present in Czech history, but

is identical with the idea of humanity, with the personal and social morality that was the heart of the Bohemian Reformation. Masaryk is in this a Czech and defender of our Reformation, endeavoring for a religious revival of primarily a moral kind. The Bohemian Reformation invoked Jesus and the gospel as the highest religious authorities, and therefore it was against ecclesiastical absolutism, against the papacy and clericalism as the spiritual reign of a theological caste over the laity.  

The great leaders of the National Revival worked in the same spirit, even though they were Catholics or even members of the clergy. Masaryk did not see this as a serious complication of his concept. They all accepted the new philosophy of the Enlightenment or appealed to the church to renounce some of its anti-Hussite verdicts. They might have been Catholics, but their loyalty to the church had less meaning to them than that of the Czech cause of humanity. Their Catholicism was in itself nothing more than a peel that would have fallen off if free political and social circumstances had existed.

The initial reaction to Masaryk's refusal of a nationalist concept of history was, of course, sympathetic since it was a time when historiography was full of similar ideologies. By establishing his idea of history on the moral notion of humanity he basically opened the history of his country to others who did not belong to the same ethnic group. The Bohemian Reformation is the spiritual heritage of everyone who believes in the same ideal of humanity. When we, however, look critically at the implications of Masaryk's position, many aspects of his stance seem to be as intolerant as a nationalist view. In Masaryk's eyes the history of the Czechs is a string of episodes highly motivated by morality, such as Hus, the Bohemian Brethren, Comenius and others. Periods that do not follow this basic guideline do not belong to Czech history but were imposed on the Czechs from outside, in Masaryk's view mainly by the Catholic Church and its secular arm, the Hapsburg Empire. Catholicism and its influence on Bohemian culture has au fond no place in the idea of humanity, which is supposed to form the character of the Czechs. Or, in other words, true Czechs reject the Catholic religion and the Hapsburgs and belong to the Hussite tradition. Their identity is fundamentally Protestant since humanity is incompatible with Catholicism. As a result of his concept, Masaryk denied a large part of his fellow Czechs a share in the national tradition and identity.

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594 V tom [Masaryk] je Čechem a obhájcem naší reformace, usilující o náboženské obrození v první řadě mravni. Česká reformace dovolávala se jako nejvyšší náboženské autority Ježiša a evangelia, a byla proto proti církevnímu absolutismu, proti papežství a clerikalismu jako duchovnímu panství teologické kasty nad laiky.” Havelka, p. 589.
Pekaf, on the other hand, based his view of Czech history on the nationalist principle. The practical result was that he was able to accept historical periods dominated by the Catholic Church as belonging to the Czech national heritage. The clearest example of this is the Baroque era, which Masaryk and others cursed as the *doba temna*, the “Time of Darkness,” but Pekaf nevertheless valued because of its cultural impulses. Surprisingly, Pekaf was able to develop a more critical and objective view of Bohemian history compared to Masaryk precisely because of his choice of a nationalist orientation. From a historiographic point of view his studies on subjects from the fifteenth till the seventeenth century have a greater value and are less biased than publications by his contemporary antagonists. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the idea of national awareness deformed his view on e.g. the Hussite movement. Pekaf in turn was not able to accept that the contributions the German-speaking inhabitants of Bohemia made were fully a part of the country’s heritage and tradition.

Many Czech historians have taken part in the Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History. Some of them also wrote directly about the main subject of our interest, Milicius de Chremsir. We will refer to these historians later. Here, however, one historian and indeed politician is worthy of mention for several reasons. Zdeněk Nejedly (1878-1962) made his contribution to the dispute in 1913. About fifty years later, in 1962 he was buried as someone who had established the basic guidelines for Communist education in the second half of the twentieth century. Like Pekaf, he had studied with Jaroslav Goll, and in the beginning of his publishing activities he devoted himself to the history of music. His books about the Hussite and pre-Hussite singing practices of 1904 and 1907 are still authorities in their field. From 1930 till 1937 he published four volumes of a biography about Tomáš G. Masaryk. The work was never finished. During the Second World War he worked as a history professor in Moscow, where he fully converted to the Communist idea. After the war, he became minister of education. With a two-year interruption, he acted in this function till 1953. He wrote down his basic ideas about the education of history in a book whose title makes clear his line of thought: *Komunisté, dědici velkých tradic českého národa*, “The Communists, the Heirs of the Great Traditions of the Czech Nation.”

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*Published in Prague in 1946.*
Nejedly's study *Spor o smysl českých dějin*, “The Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History,” was printed as a separate publication. This work was an attempt to find some kind of compromise between Pekař and Masaryk, between positivist historiography, which tried to describe only the facts and the philosophy of history, which interpreted the facts from a moral point of view. Nejedly sympathized with both scholars, who according to him basically agreed with one another but only spoke both on different and incompatible levels. The dispute between Masaryk and Pekař was not one between equally qualified scholars, since the former was a philosopher and the second a historian. Historical science wants to know the facts, but science as such — like the human mind — wants to know why something particular happened. It is the task of the philosophy of history to give an answer to that question. By the use of intuition a scholar can find answers that are unacceptable to the pure, positivist historiographer. History, however, is about people whom we can access by understanding them through psychology. This can bring us to conceive the aims and ideals of our ancestors during, e.g. the Hussite movement or the Bohemian Brethren.

Nejedly did not agree with Masaryk's idea that the Hussite movement and its aftermath occurred on a purely moral and religious level. It was primarily a progressive national movement, as he called it. It was progressive because of its moral implications, which Nejedly refused to identify as religious. We have to take away the religious packaging from Hus' thinking to find his pure humanity, his love for the nation, his ideas about society, freedom and responsibility. The thrust of the Hussite movement did not allow for agreement with the church or with religion itself. Its nature was anticlerical because of the oppression of the nation by the church. It was an attempt to reform public life on a basis different from the church and the secular power had up to that time. Its ethical claims concerned not exclusively or even primarily the church, but the whole of society including the church. Since the church appeared to be an enemy of the reform efforts, the rupture between the Czechs and the church became definitive. The Czech nation abandoned the church as such in the course of history, which became obvious later, especially in the time of the National Revival. The religious freedom of the nineteenth century did not result in a massive return to the Protestant churches, but rather led to a secularization due to the anticlericalism of Czech thinking and self-understanding.

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61 Published in Prague in 1913. It is also included in Havelka, p. 321-360.
For Nejedly the meaning of Czech history was primarily the split between the nation as such and the church. According to him, secularization belongs at the heart of the national heritage and began in the late Middle Ages. It might not have been too difficult for Nejedly to convert to the Communist ideology during the Second World War. The national tradition of progressive liberation from authoritative and oppressive forces found in his opinion its natural continuation in the socialist movement, which proclaimed the end of bourgeois rule and the beginning of a new age of the proletariat.

The Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History practically ended with the occupation of the young republic by Nazi-Germany. By that time the two main protagonists, Masaryk and Pekař, had died. The next generation of historians did not have the opportunity to find its own answer to the question, thus leaving the final outcome of the dispute open. Two totalitarian systems did not allow open debate about the self-understanding and identity of the Czechs. The result of this fate might be more far-reaching than it appears at first sight. The debate affected not only the interpretation of the Hussite era, but basically the self-definition of the Czech nation among its neighbors, primarily Germans. There was no opportunity to finish the debate and to find a mature answer to the question of the position that Czechs have in Europe. During Communist rule, the dispute continued mainly in unofficial circles outside the control of the state. Only at the end of the 60’s during the Prague Spring did a public discussion on the issue take place in a few magazines. Among the authors were Václav Havel and Milan Kundera. The debate was too dangerous to the bureaucratic regime of the 1970’s and 1980’s to be permitted and again had to find its place outside the official scholarly forums and publications.62 The consequence of these attempts to marginalize such important questions about the meaning of Czech history and identity is that even at the end of the twentieth century the Czechs are still grappling with many issues on their relationship to their environment, their neighbors and their self-determination.

3. Milicius in the Historiography after the Second World War

As we have seen, the context and atmosphere of research on Milicius before the Second World War was dominated by the Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History. The debate was then, however, completely interrupted for more than fifty years. The war and the Communist regime after it had a disastrous effect on Czech historiography. Scholars of history could not continue in the traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those who chose to stay in their posts were very limited in their research possibilities and often had to pay tribute to the regime. Many fields of research were not recommended, especially where the history of the church or religion was concerned. There was no systematic study of the fourteenth century in the years after the war, although sporadically some publications were printed. Hus himself and the Hussite movement, however, were studied. This was partly for political reasons since the regime wished to confirm that Communist rule was an inevitable historical development and the climax of history. Hus and especially his radical followers had to be presented as proto-Communists who had no specific religious background. Both Masaryk and Pekár’s lines of thought were abandoned in order to make place for the new, Marxist historiography, which employed the model of class warfare. Nevertheless, some elements of the historiography of the 1930’s were ready for Marxist use. The Czechoslovak regime after the Second World War regarded the Roman Catholic Church as their greatest domestic enemy. Anti-Catholic tendencies in the historical memory of people were vulgarized and strengthened by many publications, films and literature. The fate of many historians who were persecuted, sentenced to imprisonment or even executed is a reflection of the extensive manipulation of history during Central Europe’s recent past.

In the years between the end of the war and the Communist take-over in February 1948 it was still possible to do an unbiased study of history, even when the political circumstances were unfavourable. In 1947 the Protestant church historian František Michálek Bartoš (1889-1972), published his study Čechy v době Husově, 1378-1415, “Bohemia in Hus’ Time.” The book was the first volume of a larger work of three volumes and presented a synthesis of Hussite history. The other volumes were published in 1965 and 1966. Bartoš was a professor at the Hussite Theological Faculty and later at

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Kutnar and Marek, p. 710 ff.
the Comenius Theological Faculty, where he applied the concepts of Palacký and Masaryk to church history. He edited many manuscripts and sources from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He placed the main emphasis in his work on the religious character of the Hussite movement. He paid much attention to the individual, even psychological elements in the history of the persons he was studying. Precisely these two components were not much appreciated by the Communist regime after 1948. Although he was able to continue his work, his high output of publications dramatically declined after this date.

In his main work on the Hussite revolution, Bartoš presented Milicius as the most important predecessor of Hus. Both preachers shared the same agenda, which was simply to return the church to the purity of the first period of its existence. Both found themselves in open confrontation with the majority of clergy and church authorities because of the radicalism and sense of purpose with which they realized their program. Milicius was miraculously freed, whereas Hus was condemned as heretic and died at the stake in Constance. Bartoš described Milicius as a preacher who wanted “only to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, without deliberation, whatever the final consequences, because any kind of half-heartedness was against his soul.”

In the beginning of his career as a preacher he left all his positions that were connected to power and wealth in order to follow Christ independently. According to Bartoš, a movement of great historical dimensions arose thanks to Milicius’ work. This movement was prescribed by heaven already during Milicius’ lifetime or immediately after his death. Since Milicius died in Avignon before the final verdict, his followers were banned from Prague and the reform movement had its first major setback in its history. “However, it was rooted too deeply in the heart of the nation, and it was also kept alive by the conditions which it turned itself against and which it wanted to reform.”

According to Bartoš, Milicius’ pioneer work led to the translation of the Bible. Returning to original Christianity, and therefore to the Bible, was at the heart of the reforms and indeed at the heart of the Reformation in Bohemia and Europe in Bartoš’s view. One of the goals of the movement was to

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translate the Bible into the vernacular. Moreover, whenever Milicius and his followers had to defend themselves against the accusations of some clergy, they were forced to return to the Bible to find arguments supporting their struggle for truth. On the basis of Milicius’ activities, the spiritual foundations of the Bethlehem Chapel were laid, which emphasized the Bible and preaching. This was the gathering place of Hus and his followers, who according to Bartoš wanted to fight for the truth.

He became the heir and successor of the Father of the Bohemian [Czech] Reformation, the speaker of Milicius’ preaching school. The witness Milicius and the Master of Paris [Matthias de Janow] were dead, but they spoke directly and explicitly to Hus in the founding document of Bethlehem and in his friends and charitable people in whose memory are the principles, aims and struggles of Milicius and his disciples, their persecution and writings.66

Hus’ struggle was the struggle of Milicius, and the efforts of Hus’ enemies to overthrow his work were driven by their will to stop Milicius’ inheritance once and for all. In the eyes of his adversaries Hus was “a new and much more dangerous Milicius.”67 The parallels between the fates of Milicius and Hus confirmed Bartoš in his analysis, which dubbed Milicius to be the first forerunner of Hus, the great Bohemian reformer. Both were preachers and considered preaching as their main task, both were accused by groups of Prague clergy, and both were in one way or another condemned by church authorities. Milicius’ absolution in Avignon did not change this. His followers were oppressed and his work was diminished anyhow, notwithstanding his acquittal from heresy. In Milicius, the church returned to the purity of the time of the apostles, which became the heart of the Bohemian Reformation.

Bartoš’s interpretation of Milicius was basically supported by Howard Kaminsky, who saw Milicius as a kind of Francis of Assisi, remarking that times were different and Milicius never received the stigmata. Kaminsky spoke about “the more or less Franciscan style of Milič’s practical, non-denunciatory efforts” in attracting “a band of preachers who joined him in his poor life, dependent on alms, constantly working among the people.”68

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66“Stal se dědicem a nástupcem Otce české reformace, mluvčím kazatské školy Miličovy. Světec Milič i Mistr Pařízký byli mrtví, ale mluvili k Husovi přímo a výmluvně v zakládací listině Betléma a v jeho přátelích a dobrodincích, v nichž dosud žily v zbožné úctě paměti zásady, záměry i boje Miličovy i jeho žáků, jejich pronásledování a spisy.” Bartoš, Čechy, p. 265.


Milicius stood at the beginning of a movement that would choose the Hussite Revolution as its destination. Jerusalem turned into Bethlehem, the base for Johannes Hus and his followers.

In his aforementioned study F.M. Bartoš did not turn this definition of Milicius and of the Bohemian Reformation explicitly against the Roman Catholic Church. For its genre and time the book was a fairly objective study of Hus and his life. The study did not systematically use the nationalistic argumentation of Palacky's school. This is even more of a surprise when we take into account that Bartoš researched his work during the Second World War. In earlier publications, the church historian did not hesitate to stress this nationalist idea of history. Among his contributions to the Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History is a small brochure published in 1919, in which he vehemently defended Masaryk and Palacky against Pekař. The movement of the National Revival was nothing but a continuation of Hus' Bohemian Reformation, he stated. The re-Catholicization of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a serious violation of this orientation of Czech history, resulting in a long-standing deviation from the main path. While searching for its identity, the modern Czech nation can find in the Bohemian Brethren a source of inspiration for formulating its social and spiritual direction.

To continue in the work of the nation-builders today presupposes primarily an understanding of the right extent of their yearning and ideas, to experience internally the whole philosophical development that began with our Reformation and Revival, to experience it and go through it and then to continue in the traditions of our greatest spirits.

Bartoš' work established the trend for much of the historiography from the Protestant side concerning Hus and his significance in Czech history. To the modern successors of the Bohemian Brethren, who are a minority in Czech society today, the key role that nation-builders such as Palacky and Masaryk gave Hus signifies that Evangelical Protestants are finally recognized for their contribution to Czech history and the nation. They were not only historically the descendants of the Bohemian Reformation movement but regarded themselves no less than the keepers of the spirit of the modern Czech nation. During the building of this nation, the heart of the Protestant...
movement became the foundation of the national identity as it was defined by the mainstream of the Revival. The Protestants were the custodians of the best of Czech tradition and were respected by the spiritual authorities of the nation. Still today this idea is present in Czech Protestant churches and theology, as becomes clear when viewed in the context of the canonization of the Baroque Catholic agitator Jan Sarkander in 1995.\textsuperscript{71}

Amedeo Molnár (1923-1990),\textsuperscript{72} the successor of Bartoš at the Comenius Theological Protestant Faculty in Prague, saw the significance of the Hussite movement predominantly in its religious and social content. He downplayed the national element in the history of Czech Protestantism, but turned his attention to its revolutionary character. From its very first beginnings the Hussite movement, which Molnár consequently called the “Hussite revolution,” had a very critical relation to secular power. It was the merging of secular and spiritual powers that had brought corruption to the church. From the fourth century on the church had not concentrated only on its spiritual aspects, but had gained power in society due to the position of the official or even state church. The root of the crisis of the late medieval church had to be attributed to Constantine the Great’s decision in 313 to establish Christianity as the official religion in his empire. According to Molnář's analysis, Hussitism has to be understood as a protest against the close relations and convergence of religious and secular powers. Constantinism had captured the church and deprived it of its prophetic voice that could be used to protest against and admonish those in power. The church itself had become a factor in the balance of power in society and therefore shared responsibility for the

\textsuperscript{71}In 1995 Jan Sarkander was canonized in Olomouc. He was a priest in Moravia who openly propagated a re-Catholisization of the country dominated by Utraquists. He was tortured and killed by Protestant nobility in 1620. His canonization brought a serious crisis to the ecumenical relations between Roman Catholics and Protestants in 1994 and 1995. To the latter Sarkander was a symbol of the intolerant Counter-Reformation and the suffering of its opponents, their ancestors. In their protests even official representatives of the Protestant churches like the synodical senior of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren used arguments stating that the canonization was not only an insult to Protestantism in the country, but rather to the whole national tradition of the Hussite uprising and the Czech Brethren. See Evangelici o Janu Sarkandrovi [Protestants on Jan Sarkander], Heršpice 1995; The Correspondence between the Moderator of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Mgr. Pavel Smetana and the Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in the Years 1990-1995 and with President Václav Havel to the Problem of Canonization of Jan Sarkander, Praha s.d.; Peter Morée, Česká evangelická teologie v očích jednoho cizince [The Czech Protestant Theology in the Eyes of a Foreigner], contribution to the symposium “The Czech Protestant Theology at the End of the 20th Century,” December 1995, published in: Rocenka Evangelické teologické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy 1993-1996, Praha 1996, p. 65-71.

\textsuperscript{72}On Molnár see Noemi Rejchrtová (ed.), Směřování, Sborník k šedesátinám Amedea Molnára [Orientation, Festschrift to the sixtyeth birthday of Amedeo Molnár], Praha 1983.
existing injustice and corruption. This fact was the main target of the Hus­site movement and the preachers who laid its foundations.

In a publication from 1956, Molnár called this fundamentally critical ap­proach the eschatological orientation of the Bohemian Reformation or the “First Reformation,” as he used to say. The situation of the church in the fourteenth century as well as in the seventeenth century urgently needed to be changed. The followers of the Reformation understood their era as one in which a definitive decision had to be made about the future of church and society. They found a true face for this crisis — that is an identity and form for it — in the struggle between Christ and Antichrist. They believed a radical reform of the church was necessary to reverse God’s verdict of condemnation. A choice had to be made on which side one stood, either on the side of life or of death, light or darkness, good or evil.

The eschatologically founded and only in an eschatological context understood claim of clear confession and declaration of color, the claim which contained an appeal to a spiritual or even a physical battle plays a decisive role in the lives of the Czech reformed Christians, though in a different manner, but always as a starting point, from Milicius de Chremisir till Comenius. Eschatology therefore belongs among the most fundamental characteristics of the Bohemian Reformation, to the motifs which it guarded independently and as a contribution to the general church.

In the sermons of Milicius this emphasis on eschatology began, and it lasted during the Hussite movement and the Bohemian Brotherhood, till the defeat in the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. Molnár called the later Hussite preachers even miličovci, “Milicians,” followers of Milicius and his eschatological concept. This preacher was truly the Father of the Bohemian (Czech) Reformation because the movement continued in his spirit. “Milić’s purifying concept of Christianity determined the future direction for Hussite and Brethren theologians.”

In Molnár’s view, the Bohemian Reformation returned to some very fundamental principles of early and pure Christianity. In practice this meant

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"Eschatologicky zdůvodněný a v eschatologické souvislosti jen všímány požadavek jas­ného vyznání a přiznání barvy, požadavek obsahující výzvu k boji duchovnímu, ano i tělesnému, podmanivě platí nad životy českých reformačních křesťanů v různé sice míře, ale vždy vychozí, od Milící z Kroměříže až ke Komenskému. Patří tedy eschatologie k nejzak­ladnějším charakteristickým rysům české reformace, k motivům, které samostatné a pro obecnou církev přínosné dostěžila.” Amedeo Molnár, Eschatologická naděje české reformace, [The Eschatological Hope of the Bohemian Reformation], in: Od reformace k zítřku [From the Reformation to Tomorrow], Praha 1956, p. 13 (Italics by Molnár).

that the Czechs went their own way till they were forced back into the Catholic Church after the Battle of White Mountain. Like Palacky he also gave the image of an Alleingang of the Bohemian Reformation, but unlike Palacky he saw it not so much as a conceptual decision, but rather as a practical outcome of the choice of the reform movement for radical changes without compromising basic issues. This radicalism had also major social implications as the Bohemian Reformation became involved on behalf of the poor and oppressed. The poor are the sign of the coming age. Solidarity with them is not only a protest against social injustice, but more profoundly a turning away from the values of this world with its eschatological reality of oppression. Preaching and poverty are the two basic ideas of the Bohemian Reformation as it started with Milicius. This orientation has two features in practical life, Molnár said. In the first place, there was the appeal for frequent communion as a symbol of salvation from eschatological anxiety. The second point was that Milicius and his followers had a dislike for scholastic education, which was dominated by logic, because they regarded it as a harmful, human addition to the teachings of the early church.\footnote{Eschatologická naděje, p. 16-17.}

Molnár did not follow Palacký or Bartoš in their approach towards the Bohemian Reformation in terms of its significance to the national cause. His work places no explicit sign of importance on Hussitism in relation to the national Czech tradition as such, nor can such significance be inferred from his concept of it. From a logical point of view, notions of this kind could not be a part of his idea of the Bohemian Reformation because they would contradict his emphasis on having a critical relationship with secular powers and the state. The church is not supposed to take part in this world, which is inevitably based on oppression and social injustice. Rather the church has to keep a distance from secular power and its foundations such as a national identity. According to Molnár’s concept, church and state are rather on terms of opposition or even animosity, which makes it impossible that the church could supply a constitutive contribution to the affairs of the state or the nation.

On the occasion of the six hundredth anniversary of Milicius’ death, several publications were written about the preacher. The main monograph came from a professor in church history at the Theological Faculty of the
Czechoslovak Hussite Church, Miloslav Kaňák. The greatest merit of his study is the completeness of its inventory, which contains all known facts and ideas on Milicius. Its weakness is that it did not give a broader analysis of the preacher’s significance. According to Kaňák, Milicius was primarily a preacher for the moral conversion of the church, protesting against the power and wealth of substantial parts of the clergy. The preacher definitely did not belong to the Roman Catholic tradition that had become involved with secular power. He was the first to show the way to a deeper change after similar but quite inconsequent attempts by the emperor and the archbishop. He was one of the reformers who understood that the church had to return to its roots, to its origins from the first centuries when it was still poor and pure. In this regard, Milicius belonged to the tradition of the Waldensians and the Hussites, to the fundamental stream of the Reformation. Therefore, in the Czech context, he is called the “Father of the Bohemian (Czech) Reformation.” He conceived some of the basic ideas of the Reformation, to which he himself belonged.

The anniversary of 1974 brought also the first new edition since 1946 of some of Milicius’ texts. Vilém Herold and Milan Mráz edited the three Synodical Sermons which Milicius delivered at some councils of the clergy of the Prague diocese on request of the archbishop. In the introduction to the edition, the authors concluded that as far as his theological ideas were concerned, Milicius was not exceptional for his time nor for his environment. He was in many respects a child of his age, sharing the values and mentality of his contemporaries. Above all, he wanted to reform some of the features of the church affected by corruption and wealth. The means he wanted to use were rather moderate since he did not want to change the existing order in the church nor in society.

However, Herold and Mráz saw another level of Milicius’ significance, which they called the objective one. The consequences of preacher’s work were far-reaching. His ideas, though moderate in their own field, were one of the main impetuses for the Hussite movement, which would shatter the existing structures of power. He prepared the way for Hus and the Hussite movement by the substance of his appeal for reform, which was very close to the four Prague articles of 1420. The similarity with this Hussite declara-

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76 Miloslav Kaňák, Milíc z Kroměříže, Praha 1975.
77 Kaňák, p. 55-60.
tion can be seen in Milicius’ efforts in preaching, in his criticism of the clergy’s indulgence and in his struggle against moral corruption in society. Finally, Herold and Mráz stated that Milicius independently came to conclusions similar to John Wyclif in England reached in the same time period. He prepared the ground for a warm acceptance of Wyclif, who had a decisive influence on Johannes Hus. Milicius might not have wanted to realize reforms in the sense of changing the social order, nevertheless he initiated such changes through the course of history. The interesting conclusion of these two scholars is that Milicius must be considered one of the main predecessors of Hus, but only in the sense that he was the unwitting Father of the Bohemian (Czech) Reformation.

The German discussion on Milicius and pre-Hussite history took a different direction in the years after the Second World War. Scholars from the former German minority in Bohemia stressed this part of history’s connection to other developments in Europe. In the case of Milicius, they pointed to the movement of Pre-Humanism in Italy and of the *Devotio moderna* in the Netherlands. In 1964 Eduard Winter published in East Berlin a study on the influence of Pre-Humanism on the church reforms in Bohemia.79 Pre-Humanism is in his definition the movement that connected the reception of ancient philosophy to the new emerging awareness of life and nation. Replacing the clerical element as the foundation and center of thinking—which necessarily had an international character—came the secular-national element. The most important consequence of this shift in awareness was the approach toward the church and possible reforms in it. No longer were structures and hierarchy decisive, but the institution as such had to be reformed.80 This movement that started in Italy with philosophers and writers such as Dante and Petrarca found a fertile ground in universities in Northern Italy and was soon spread to Bohemia by clerics who had gained

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high positions in the church and state. In the Bohemian context the initiators of Pre-Humanism were, according to Winter, Johannes de Dražicz, Arnestus de Pardubicz, both archbishops of Prague and Johannes Novoforiensis, the counselor of Emperor Charles IV. The ideas of the movement were propagated by some new monastic orders, of which the Austin Canons were the most important. At the center of the activities of theologians stood the vernacular language and its use within the context of the church. Several new monasteries founded in the era of Charles IV, such as Roudnice or Emaus in Prague, based their conception on the Czech or Slavonic language. Another element of Pre-Humanism strengthened this idea. The culture of the book and, connected to that, the emphasis on study were cultivated in the new monasteries and made the movement a powerful cultural impetus in church and society. The new orientation on important questions such as how to communicate and to study the teachings of the church led to a new concept of devotion. Pre-Humanism understood the needs and contribution of the individual as being more meaningful than the collective notion. Devotion became personalized; individual experience became the focus of the relationship between God and humankind. This profound change brought to an end the clergy's monopoly on devotion since the laity was recognized and became involved in theological matters. According to Winter, this new devotion moved away from the rationalistic understanding of Scholasticism to a more emotional appeal to the heart of the listeners. Such were the basic features of the Devotio moderna in the Netherlands led by Geert Groote.  

Winter placed Milicius in this context of Pre-Humanism, as his ideas were close to those of Arnestus de Pardubicz, Johannes Novoforiensis and Charles IV. Winter saw in him the main force that brought a change to the religious environment in Bohemia. For many reasons, the preacher stood in the shadow of his disciple Johannes Hus, who could not have gained the support he did without the pioneer work and influence of Milicius. Winter stressed the efforts of Milicius in the field of popular preaching and lay community building. Sermons were delivered in the vernacular, one of the

81 Winter, p. 165 ff.
82 Winter criticizes here one of his predecessors in historiography on Bohemia, Constantin Höfler. "Militsch gehört zweifelhaft zu den interessantesten und großartigsten Gestalten, die das tschechische Volk hervorgebracht hat. Die deutsche bürgerliche nationalistische Geschichtsschreibung ist ihm nicht gerecht geworden. Sie sah in ihm einen überstiegenderen Ekstatiker, der nur Unruhe in Böhmen erregt habe." Winter, p. 86.
main issues of Pre-Humanism. Milicius built his community *Jerusalem* for a broad circle of people, mainly from a lay background, without entering one of the monastic orders. With his activities Milicius sowed the seeds of the Hussite movement, which would change the face of church and society profoundly. The existing social structures were no longer indelible, but were to be adapted to the individual needs of the time and the people.


It is interesting that Winter both acknowledged a nationalistic element in Milicius' work and bridged the gap that could have resulted from such an *Alleingang*. In his eyes it was true that Milicius very much cared about national elements in his effort for church reforms, such as preaching in the vernacular. Through this aim he engendered a movement which was very much a Czech development. These components can also be found in Palacky's concept of Czech history, but with one important difference. Palacky stated that the movement of the Bohemian Reformation originated purely from Czech sources, that foreign influences were of a minor significance and that the Czechs have their own, independent history. Winter placed the Czech developments in a broader context and saw their roots in a European movement that led to a shift from a medieval to a modern mentality in both the church and society. Milicius was one of the reformers of the fourteenth century who, in his case in a Bohemian environment, conceived and practiced the new understanding of life and faith. He contributed to a development that took place everywhere in Europe and that placed the individual with his specific conditions at the center of attention.

Winter found approval for his viewpoint from another German scholar, Johanna Schreiber or Girke-Schreiber from the Munich-based Collegium Carolinum for research on Bohemian history. In two articles, she presented Milicius as a representative of the movement of *Devotio moderna*, which is, according to her, generally wrongly attributed to the Netherlands only.

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There are remarkable parallels between the lives of Geert Groote and Milicius when we take into account their conversion, their preaching activities, emphasis on a lay movement, criticism of the clergy and their difficulties with church authorities. The devotion that both preachers taught to their disciples was based on a return to the values of the first Christians, fear of the consequences of sin and evil and on individual *exercitia* of Christian virtues. Both were very much concerned about the fate of the church, which in their eyes was corrupted by the attitude of many clergymen. The way to purify the church was to return it to the roots of Christianity. This goal could only be achieved by educating the people in a deeper understanding of the faith and by bringing them to a true conversion. Following Christ was at the heart of their ideas about the church and society. It is, however, not yet possible to speak about a direct connection or a mutual influence of both movements. Rather, we should view the similarity between the two as parallel developments occurring within a larger European context.

Girke-Schreiber had similar conclusions to Winter about Milicius and his movement. On one point, though, she took a very different stance. Winter saw Milicius as a predecessor of Hus, as the first one to open the way to a profound change in the church and society. Girke-Schreiber, however, disassociated Milicius and Hus, delegating the first one to only moderate reform efforts. Milicius trusted in the pope and church structures to realize the reforms he regarded as necessary. Or put even more strongly: the reforms had to be initiated by the pope since he was the head of the church. Milicius was not prepared to criticize the internal hierarchy of the church nor to declare this order a possible reason for the corruption of the clergy. However, this is exactly what later Hussites believed, thus deviating from the path Milicius took. According to Girke-Schreiber there was no continuity between Milicius and Hus. The *Devotio moderna* in Bohemia

wird in eine Defensivhaltung abgedrängt, aus der dann ganz andere Kräfte wachsen als beschauliche Frömmigkeit. Zu bruchloser Weiterführung und Entwicklung hat es hier nicht kommen können: Chelčicky und die Brüder stehen im Gegensatz zur Kirche.\

The change was already obvious in the work of Matthias de Janow, who, according to Girke-Schreiber, proclaimed suffering simply as fate and a task of humankind, instead of as a struggle against evil and injustice as Milicius had done.

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85 Schreiber, p. 112.
86 Schreiber, p. 122; also Girke-Schreiber, p. 89.
Girke-Schreiber was still able to accept Milicius, but rejected Hus and the Bohemian Reformation as a separation from the church and from Europe. In her analysis some remnants of the old German distrust towards Bohemian history are present. The Hussite movement is felt to be the development of a nationalistic character that excluded the German inhabitants from the prevailing view of history and society, as happened in the first half of the twentieth century. Milicius is in her eyes still on the right side of the line because he represented a broader European development within the Bohemian context. Girke-Schreiber’s position is in its conclusions close to the Catholic viewpoint of e.g. Sedláčk. Both were able to include Milicius in their scheme of “good historical figures,” whereas they excluded Hus from this category.

In April 1990, during his visit to the recently liberated capital Prague, Pope John Paul II made an official appeal to re-evaluate the theological ideas of Johannes Hus and the circumstances of the trial against him in Constance, which led to his death. His aim was to understand the significance of the Bohemian reformer and to bring reconciliation between the different churches and between the Czech nation and the Roman Catholic Church after a long alienation and exclusion. Many understood the pope’s appeal as an attempt to rehabilitate the Bohemian reformer. Impulses for this decision originated already in the 1960’s when, during the Second Vatican Council, Czech Cardinal Josef Beran recalled the fate of Hus and his significance for the Czech nation. During Communism, the discussion continued in some Czech exile magazines, and the first studies were published by the Polish professor Stefan Swiezawski.

In September 1993 an international symposium took place in Bayreuth, Germany titled Jan Hus, Zwischen Zeiten, Völkern, Konfessionen. It was the
first visible sign of a change in both the German and Czech, Catholic and Protestant perceptions of the Bohemian reformer. All possible aspects of Hus and Hussite history were discussed in order to find a common ground for new research into Hus’ persona and influence. Soon after the symposium, a commission was established in the diocese of Prague, which was assigned the mission to formulate the Roman Catholic Church’s new position.

In Bayreuth, the presentation on the pre-Hussite period was delivered by Manfred Gerwing, who proceeded in the direction of Eduard Winter and Johanna Girke-Schreiber. In an earlier paper, he had already defined his position on the discussion about Milicius. Between the reform movement in Bohemia and the Devotio moderna in the Netherlands there existed a great similarity of content and structure. Gerwing saw the parallels between Milicius and Groote in the threefold orientation of the work of both preachers and reformists. Both were critical toward the avarice of the world, showing solidarity to those who were its victims. Both encouraged the vita communis among their followers, by struggling for the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world. Like Johanna Girke-Schreiber Gerwing also saw the later developments of the Bethlehem Chapel and its preacher Johannes Hus as a deviation from the direction Milicius had indicated. The movement became at this point radicalized and lost its connection to the church.

In response to the ideas of Gerwing, the Czech historian Jana Nechutová suggested applying the name “charismatic spirituality” to the reform movement of Milicius and Matthias de Janow. She proposed that a distinction be made between the reform efforts of certain new monastic orders and those of Milicius and his fellow preachers. The efforts of the reform orders and of the Prague church leadership were close to Geert Groote’s movement in their attitude toward an individual, inner spiritual life. Though Milicius and his circle had certainly many ideas that were similar to Groote, their orientation

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93Gerwing, Reformbewegung, p. 132 and 141.

was collective, "eine Theologie koinonischer Prägung." The difference between the Netherlands and Bohemia was that in Bohemia the crisis of church and society was seen by Milicius as being the responsibility of every faithful person, whereas in the Netherlands the emphasis was put on the inner perfection of the individual, on the individual's relationship to God, in the context of which fellow human beings and the church as a collective play a minor role. Nechutová therefore proposed "charismatic spirituality" as a separate name for Milicius' movement, because it can contain also those elements that might not be totally orthodox. Milicius' work was continued by Matthias de Janow, who emphasized the political or collective scope of the theology of the pre-Hussites in his notions on the Eucharist. Here the difference between the Devotio moderna and the pre-Hussites became obvious.

To Nechutová, the term Devotio moderna was too general for correctly characterizing Milicius and his followers. She wanted to assure a more recognized place for the specific nature of the Bohemian movement, which led to the Hussite period and the Bohemian Reformation, whereas for Gerwing Milicius' identity was sufficiently explained by the Devotio moderna. One of his reasons might be that the model of this reform movement guaranteed a firm connection to Europe and its developments in the church and society.

From another Czech historian the idea of Milicius as a representative of the Devotio moderna got support. František Šmahel in his large monograph on the Hussite Revolution divided Milicius' life into a threefold pattern of the Vita nova, Vita contemplativa and Vita activa, which are the three elements Gerwing also stressed. According to this idea Milicius' conversion represents the Vita nova, his inner voices leading him to important decisions exemplify the Vita contemplativa, and his work in the house Jerusalem...
demonstrate the *Vita activa.* Like Howard Kaminsky, he compared the preacher to Petrus Waldes and Francis of Assisi. Unlike Gerwing he stressed the continuity between the work of Milicius and his successors, Matthias de Janow and finally Johannes Hus. In this sense Šmahel connected two interpretations of Milicius, regarding him as a predecessor of Hus who spiritually belonged to the new and critical devotion of the fourteenth century.