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A true, faithful and Christian truce... : the truce agreements between the Hussites and Margrave Albert's party in South Moravia : summary

In: Elbel, Petr. *Pravé, věrné a křesťanské příměří... : dohody o příměří mezi husity a stranou markraběte Albrechta na jižní Moravě*. Vydání první Brno: Filozofická fakulta, Masarykova univerzita, 2016, pp. 148-154

ISBN 978-80-210-8369-1

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/136011>

Access Date: 26. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

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SUMMARY

A True, Faithful and Christian Truce... The Truce Agreements between the Hussites and Margrave Albert's Party in South Moravia

A truce – that is, a temporary cessation of hostilities based on an agreement between the warring parties – has been a normal part of military conflicts from Antiquity to the present day. In Early Medieval Europe, the *indutiae*, an institution of Roman military law, had been temporarily sidelined. However, with the peace movement of the 10th and 11th centuries, the practice of concluding truces once more became an accepted part of western warfare, both in the form of the religiously motivated *treuga Dei*, which established a ceasefire on certain days of the week and on specific religious holidays, as well as in the traditional form of a suspension of hostilities on the basis of an agreement between the warring parties. However, even these ordinary truces began to be referred to as *treuga* and associated with Christian values.

Truce agreements as such also gained ground in pre-Hussite Bohemia, where in the late 14th and early 15th century, following a long period of internal peace, a series of resentments and domestic conflicts broke out. When the Czech Reformation and the Hussite Revolution sparked a long religious war in Bohemia, the situation was to change dramatically. Medieval canon law prohibited any agreements with heretics, so in theory the Catholic side could not even accede to a short-term truce with the Hussites.

The reality, however, was different. In Bohemia we come across truces between the Hussite factions and King Sigismund's party from the beginning of the Hussite Wars, although in the early 1420s these were exceptional events to which King

Sigismund expressed strong opposition. However, around the mid-1420s, truce agreements became everyday practice in Bohemia and Sigismund quietly ceased criticizing those on his side, so that by the end of the 1420s – at a meeting with Hussite leaders in Bratislava – he himself asked the Hussite side to conclude a general truce, which was to prepare the ground for the acceptance of a Hussite delegation at the next council and was also to ensure the cessation of hostilities during Sigismund's coronation journey to Rome.

Given the absence of any documentary sources, it would appear that in Hussite Moravia truce agreements were concluded somewhat later than in Bohemia – in the second half of the 1420s, and then more frequently after 1430. This might be explained by the fact that the Catholic party was in the ascendancy in the first half of the 1420s and was generally less willing to conclude truces, preferring to avoid them whenever possible. Another contributing factor may have been the uncompromising anti-Hussite stance of the Bishop of Olomouc, Jan Železný, who was against any form of agreements with heretics. Another opponent of truces was the Austrian Duke Albert V, the son and designated successor to Sigismund, who appointed him to rule over Moravia in October 1423.

In the second half of the 1420s, the Hussites gained the ascendancy in Moravia; the Bishop of Olomouc went into exile in Hungary and his influence in the margraviate waned, while the Austrian Duke Albert had to deal with Hussite incursions into the Austrian duchy, with the result that his military activities in Moravia decreased in intensity. All of this created the right conditions for the practice of concluding truces to become more established in Moravia too.

The sources only allow us to observe this phenomenon in detail in South Moravia, where a collection of truce agreements and related documents from the period 1427–1433 have been preserved (though the scope of some of the agreements extends beyond South Moravia). In the book they are subjected to a diplomatic analysis, which focuses on the form of the documents and compares them with agreements from Bohemia (chapter 2); this is followed by a historical analysis, in which the agreements are set in their historical context (chapter 3); and finally a prosopographical and topographical analysis of the signatories to the agreements and the locations associated with them (chapter 4).

The basis for the diplomatic and historical analysis is the edition in appendix no. 1, which contains a total of 24 edited charters and letters, 21 of which are preserved as originals or copies in the Brno City Archive, two in the form of an original (no. 11) or a copy (no. 5) in the Moravian Provincial Archive, and one in the form of an original in the Austrian State Archive in Vienna (no. 22). The core of the collection is made up of thirteen charters which can be described as truce agreements (nos. 1, 6–8, 10–12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22). Closely related to these are three other charters which either establish individuals' accession to existing truces (nos. 4 and 23) or confirm that these people have complied with them (no. 9). In

addition, the edition includes three charters which do not establish typical truces but do impose certain restrictions on military activities. These were assurances that no harm would come to the enemy's serfs or servants who were working in the vineyards at harvest time and transporting the grapes back home, i.e. to Brno (nos. 3, 13, 21). Alongside the contractual agreements, the edition contains three more letters which directly concern the conclusion or extension of a truce: a letter from several lords from Albert's party and from the margravian captain (*Hauptmann*) at Špilberk to the city of Znojmo and the local captain, a letter from the margravian captain in Pohořelice to the lords from Albert's party regarding the conclusion of various truces (nos. 5 and 18), and a letter from Duke Albert concerning the extension of an existing truce (no. 24). The final two documents are perhaps more loosely connected to the collection under examination. The first of them is an agreement between the warring parties to wage a "chivalrous war", the principles of which are specified in more detail (no. 2). Although the possibility of a truce being concluded between the parties is not explicitly laid down here, there is no doubt that the agreement helped to create an environment in which the institution of the truce could become firmly established in Hussite Moravia. To some extent, the same could be said of the last document (no. 15). It is another letter from Margrave Albert in which he adopts a positive stance towards agreements between the Moravian Catholic towns and the Hussite nobility to provide a military escort for merchants bringing food and other essential provisions into the towns.

The diplomatic analysis of the charters (chapter 2) revealed marked similarities in the form of the actual truce agreements, the letters on acceding to truces, and the agreements on securing the grape harvest. Special characteristics are displayed only by the exceptionally detailed truce agreement from August 1433 (no. 22) and one agreement from April 1432 (no. 19) which is objectively formulated and the original of which may have been an indenture. The other charters display a strong degree of conformity, despite the fact that they were drawn up by different representatives of the Hussite party – Hussite nobles and captains from the Taborite garrisons in Moravský Krumlov, Ivančice, Třebíč and Měříň – and intended for the Catholic party centred on the city of Brno. This raises the possibility that the agreements were based on a form drawn up in the offices of the city of Brno, the provincial governor Jan of Lomnice or the chamberlain Jošt of Rosice, who usually appeared side by side representing the Catholic party. It appears most likely that the form was devised in Brno, which was involved in all of the agreements and evidently played an active role in concluding them, as can be seen in the great emphasis placed on ensuring the safety of merchants and allowing work to continue in the vineyards owned by the burghers of Brno in the wider Brno area, which apparently constituted a significant portion of their income.

Nevertheless, the historical analysis showed that truce agreements in South Moravia can be divided into two basic types. The first type consists of local truces

of limited scope, which were normally concluded after intense fighting, usually for economic reasons. The agreement from 1427 (no. 1) can probably be assigned to this category, as can most of the autumn truces. One typical feature of these agreements is the relative uniformity of their composition and form. Most of them concern the negotiation of a short-term truce and its possible termination. The parties were forbidden from harming one another, the only exception being the collection of tributes from the opposing side's serfs, which was to be maintained even during the truce. Emphasis is also placed on the security of the roads, fields and vineyards; the grape harvest is explicitly mentioned in the autumn agreements. With certain reservations we can also include within this category the specialist agreements which did not establish truces but which did guarantee that work in the fields and vineyards could continue unhindered. It is possible that, in addition to economic reasons, the Hussite representatives sometimes entered into these agreements as a way of covering their backs when they were involved in military engagements beyond the country's borders; however, this cannot be proven unequivocally.

The second distinctive type of truce agreement was that which had "political" overtones and was concluded in order to pave the way for peace negotiations. This certainly includes the truce from 1430 (no. 5), which in the existing literature has either been incorrectly dated or entirely neglected, along with the entire Prostějov diet. In all probability, a series of truces from the spring of 1432 (nos. 16–20) also belong to this category, as does the exceptional truce from August 1433 (no. 22); theoretically, the truce from February 1431 (no. 11) could perhaps also be included in this group.

As far as the form of these truce agreements was concerned, it was usually broadly in line with that of the ordinary local truces (this is undoubtedly the case for the series of truces from the spring of 1432 and possibly also the truce from February 1431) or else had a more elaborate composition and in terms of the content of its provisions was more akin to a *Landfriede* (as is the case with the truce from August 1433, which is a kind of precursor to the *Landfrieden* from 1434). Unfortunately, the Prostějov truce from March 1430 has not been preserved, though we do know of its contents thanks to a letter from members of Albert's party to the city of Znojmo and the local captain (no. 5); however, this letter does not suggest that the agreement contained any provisions which were radically different from those of the ordinary local truces.

Although there is no fundamental difference in the form of the two types of truces outlined here, the second type of truce with "political" overtones typically had a wider range of participants which, on the one hand, did not include the Taborite garrisons in Moravia but, on the other hand, involved Margrave Albert and possibly also King Sigismund in some way. Negotiations with Albert and Sigismund were directly referred to in the letter from members of Albert's party

to Znojmo in connection with the Prostějov truce (no. 5), as well as in the letter from the Pohořelice captain William Ebser to several members of Albert's party and to the city of Brno in spring 1432 (no. 18), and in Albert's letter to his party members in the summer of 1433 (no. 24). Although Duke Albert was normally included in the truces, he does not appear to have been a fully contracting party until the truce of August 1433 (no. 22).

Finally, another typical feature of this second type of truce was that it often manifestly failed to fulfil its original purpose. The negotiations linked with it either did not take place or else broke down, as the situation in the country was not yet ripe for the conclusion of the long-term peace settlement of which the truces were supposed to form a preliminary stage (this is at least true for the truce from August 1433, which was intended to create the conditions for a provincial assembly in September 1433 at which a Landfrieden would be concluded; in the end, that did not come about until one year later and in different circumstances). Nevertheless, it is necessary to view the relevant truce agreements as an integral part of the ongoing negotiations between the Hussites on the one hand and Sigismund, Albert and the church on the other which, following the Bratislava meeting in April 1429, gradually led up to the acceptance of the Compactata.

In this context, however, we should not underestimate the significance of the first type of simple local truces. In itself, the institution of the truce represented an important victory for medieval military law and political pragmatism over ecclesiastical prohibitions and religious fanaticism on both sides. Although the motivation for some of the truces was purely economic, these agreements contributed towards a growing sense that it was possible for the two sides to negotiate and agree upon some kind of easing of the war, or at least upon rules of combat, as was demonstrated by the remarkable agreement between Diviš of Přebořov and the city of Brno on conducting a chivalrous war (no. 2).

These conclusions generally correspond with what we know about truce agreements from Hussite Bohemia. However, on closer inspection, when we compare the surviving South Moravian truces with those from Bohemia, we find at least one major difference, which is the level of parity between the parties that is immediately evident in the Moravian agreements. Above all, these agreements do not include any which had to be "bought" by the Catholic party for a large sum, as happened in Bohemia and especially in Silesia, Lusatia and the neighbouring German lands. The South Moravian truces also did not stipulate financial sanctions for violating a truce, and thus there was no difference in the amount of the contractual penalty for the two parties, which in Bohemia was sometimes higher for the Catholics. Nor do we come across religious concessions made by one party to the other, which were fairly frequent in Bohemia but also, for example, in Silesia and always favoured the Hussites (the Catholics had to undertake to respect the

four Prague Articles on their estates; with some Silesian princes, the truce agreement even contained the requirement that they convert to the chalice).

At first glance, the consistent parity between the parties in the South Moravian truces from the period 1427–1433 appears to undermine the image of a Hussite hegemony in Moravia which was presented by Josef Válka in his Hussite studies and has gained widespread acceptance. However, it should be noted that the surviving truces apply mainly to South Moravia, particularly the area around Brno. There was a certain balance of power within this region, with the Catholic party clearly predominating in the narrower Brno area and the Hussites in the outlying areas, and this balance appears to have affected the negotiation of truces. This parity in strength was not in evidence in other Moravian regions. The towns of Olomouc, Litovel and (aside from one brief Hussite episode) Šternberk were all surrounded by Hussite fortresses, thus representing “islands” in a Hussite sea, as the middle, north-west and north-east of the country were mainly Hussite from 1427 onwards. Similarly, Jihlava was cut off from the west by the Taborite area of Pelhřimov, from the north by the estates of the Hussite aristocrats, and from the east by the Taborite garrisons in Třebíč and Měřín, and it was only in the south that it had more significant Catholic neighbours, with whom Jihlava had less than ideal relations. The East Moravian Catholic bastion of Uherské Hradiště was in a similar position. Therefore, it is justified to speak of the “hegemony of the Hussites” across most of Moravia in the period 1427–1434, and we can assume that this was the reason why truces were concluded less often there.

The geographical aspect is analysed in detail in a topographical and prosopographical excursus (chapter 4) in which the author attempts to ascertain what the truce agreements reveal about the Moravian aristocrats’ affiliation to the Catholic and Hussite parties, and to what extent information from these agreements can be used to reconstruct the strength of the warring factions in (South) Moravia. The conclusion reached is that, although the agreements provide a great deal of valuable information which has not yet been fully exploited, they are not a source upon which it is possible to base more general judgments about the size and composition of the Albertian and Hussite parties in Moravia.

At the end of the book is a series of appendices. As was mentioned above, appendix 1 contains an edition of 24 documents, written mostly in Old Czech and partly in Early New High German (the correspondence between Duke Albert and his captains). Only the documents which are essentially contracts are then itemized in the table in appendix 2. Appendix 3 contains a map which shows the towns and individual residences that appear in the documents on the Catholic (black) and Hussite (red) side. Naturally, the map does not take into account other sources and the fact that the stance of individual people and the affiliation of individual locations to one side or the other were constantly in flux. Appendix 4 contains

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photographs of the charters and letters preserved as originals or as copies from the period. Only one illustrative example is given of a copy of a document in the manuscript *Staré paměti brněnské* (*Old Brno Memories*) by the town scribe Jan Munka of Ivančice from the early 16th century, in which all of the other analyzed documents are preserved.

translated by Graeme Dibble