

The English Rising of 1381, Wyclif and Lollards
in the Czech point of view

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Of all European countries, two kingdoms were closest as regards their religious climate: the English and the Czech. Only in these two places did heresy find adequate breeding ground; it was to these heresies that three out of five ecclesiastical councils in the first half of the 15th century were devoted. It was Wyclifism with its popular Lollard branch on the one hand, and Hussitism with Taborite Picardy on the other. In addition to these two socially important founts of non-conformist religious views, prior to 1420 one could only find clandestine substratum of sectarians of distinctly Waldensian orientation, occasionally various species of Beghards and Beguines, and, in the triangle borderland of modern France, Belgium and Netherlands also controversial communities of brothers and sisters of the Free Spirit.¹ Intellectual deviations from binding orthodoxy can, in

¹ See M. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy. Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*. Third Edition (Oxford, 2002), most recently K. Utz Tresp, *Von der Häresie zur Hexerei. Wirkliche*

this time frame, be counted on the fingers of one hand. The same held true for different free-thinkers from among the craftsmen and artisans.

After the Hussite movement turned into a military conflict that, in the 1420s and 1430s, engulfed all of Central Europe, heretical infection began to spread also in those places, where there had previously been no mention of it. This was the case for neighbouring Poland and Slovakia, and also Moldova and Transylvania. Elsewhere, for example in Croatia and Slovenia, Hussite thoughts fell on the fertile soil prepared by Bogomils and Cathars.² The Hussite movement infused the Waldensian diaspora, supported by radical communities around Tábor and Žatec, with a life-giving force. This Waldensian-Hussite International, in the words of Amedeo Molnár,³ should not be overestimated, but in this region it was a force to be reckoned with, and one that made it possible for one of the oldest heresies to survive to the present day. It was not a coincidence that Hussite articles resonated powerfully in the traditional areas of popular heresy on the frontier of southern Flanders, county Artois, Hainaut and Picardy. Elsewhere in France and also further in Italy or in Spain, however, Czech heresy left mostly a negative impression.

The explosive potential of rebellions against the established order exhausted itself in the previous years especially in France during the uprising of Etienne Marcel and peasant Jacquerie. The same held true for social tensions in Italian communes, which in Florence and in Sienna spent themselves in the uprising of early textile proletariat, in the so-called revolt of the Ciompi. If we put aside the turbulences in some German towns, then Germany had to wait for its largest shake-up until the beginning of the Lutheran reformation. However, we must take into consideration the social upheavals and uncertainty during outbreaks of the so-called Black Death pandemic, whose explosiveness was to a great extent reduced by processions of flagellants and by anti-semitic pogroms. But, having examined these and similar events across the contemporary world, the only strong correspondence standing out is that between the situation in Bohemia and in

und imaginare Sekten im Spätmittelalter (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Schriften 59, Hannover 2008).

² For an overview of Hussite responses abroad, see my *Hussitische Revolution III*. (Hannover, 2002), pp. 1913–1966. I will silently refer to this three-volume work, summarizing existing as well as my own research, in the course of this essay. For a “vade mecum” on the English situation, see A. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation. Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988).

³ A. Molnár, *Storia dei Valdesi I. Dalle origini all'adesione alla Riforma* (Torino, 1974), chap. VII. L'internazionale valdo-hussita. For a critique of Molnár's thesis, see K. Utz Tremp, *Waldenser. Wiedergänger, Hexen und Rebellen* (Freiburg, Schweiz, 1999).

England. I will not speak directly about Wyclif and his Czech followers. This *causa celebris* demands book-length studies.⁴ I will not even refer too much the Hussite movement itself.⁵ Rather, I will limit myself to observations of a historian of the Hussite movement, who leafs through pages of English history of the second half of the 14th and beginning of the 15th century.

The largest English peasant revolt of the 14th century lasted for about six weeks and impacted territory of roughly the size of half of Bohemia. Thanks to the rich archival sources and numerous chronicle accounts it is possible to give a comprehensive account of the causes and progression of this uprising.⁶ In the populous

⁴ For example, G. Leff, 'Wyclif and Hus: A Doctrinal Comparison', in A. Kenny, ed., *Wyclif in his times* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 105–125 (revised text of 1967–8 edition); A. Patschovsky, 'Ekklesiologie bei Johannes Hus', in H. Boockmann, B. Moeller and K. Stackmann, eds., *Lebenslehren und Weltenentwürfe im Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 1980), pp. 370–399; V. Herold, *Pražská universita a Wyclif* (Praha, 1984); B. Töpfer, 'Die Wertung der weltlich-staatlichen Ordnung durch John Wyclif und Jan Hus', in F. Šmahel, ed., *Häresie und vorzeitige Reformation*, (München, 1988), pp. 55–76; M. Wilks, 'Reformatio Regni: Wyclif and Hus as Leaders of Religious Protest Movements', in A. Hudson, ed., *Wyclif Political Ideas and Practice. Papers by Michael Wilks* (Oxford 2000), pp. 63–84. I.C. Levy, ed., *A Companion to John Wyclif. Late Medieval Theologian* (Leiden – Boston, 2006) mentions Hus only peripherally.

⁵ See my older as well as more recent studies, available in English: 'The Idea of the Nation in Hussite Bohemia', *Historica*, xvi–xvii (1969), pp. 143–247, 93–197; 'Wyclif's Fortune in Hussite Bohemia', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xliii (1970), pp. 16–34; 'The Kuttnerberg Decree and the Withdrawal of the German students from Prague 1409. A Discussion', *History of Universities*, iv (1984), pp. 153–166; 'Jan Hus – Heretic or Patriot', *History Today*, xl (1990), pp. 27–33; 'Literacy and Heresy in Hussite Bohemia', in *Heresy and Literacy, 1000–1530*. Ed. by P. Biller and A. Hudson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 237–254; 'The Hussite Critique of the Clergy's Civil Dominion', in P.A. Dykema and H.A. Oberman, eds., *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden – New York – Köln, 1993), pp. 83–90; 'The Social Background of the Hussite Movement', *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, i (1996), pp. 19–21; 'The Hussite Movement: An Anomaly of European History?', in M. Teich, ed., *Bohemia in History* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 79–97; 'Causa non grata: Premature Reformation in Hussite Bohemia', in J. Kłoczowski, ed., *Christianity in East Central Europe 2. Late Middle Ages* (Lublin, 1999), pp. 224–231; 'The Acta of the Constance Trial of Master Jerome of Prague', in H. Barr and A.M. Hutchison, eds., *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale. Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson* (Medieval Church Studies 4; Turnhout, 2005), pp. 323–334; *The Charles University in the Middle Ages. Selected Studies*, (Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 28; Leiden – Boston, 2007); 'The Hussite Revolution (1419–1471)', in J. Pánek Pánek and O. Tůma, eds., *A History of the Czech Lands*, (Praha, 2009), pp. 137–158.

⁶ Of the older literature on the English uprising, see an important anthology of texts by R.B. Dobson, ed., *The Peasant's Revolt of 1381*. 2nd Ed. (London, 1983), also numerous works by R.H. Hilton, for example, *Bond Man made Free. Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London, 1973), *Class conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism. Essays in Medieval Social History* (London 1985). For a Marxist point of view, see also Gerlinde Mothes, *England im Umbruch. Volksbewegungen an der Wende*

and economically more-developed areas east of London and in the capital's vicinity, where the revolt of 1381 had its focus, communities tenaciously defended their privileges and interests already since the end of the 13th century. More than once in that time were they able to enforce their demands directly. Experience gained from these conflicts remained in the popular memory and made it easier to mobilize people quickly in subsequent times. The fact that the different communities, parishes and tax districts boasted developed forms of autonomy were also an important factor.

One of the symptoms of the long-term development (from the end of the 13th century to the first half of the 15th century) was a gradual decrease in the real value of the tithes, and also of prices of agricultural products, while, in the same time period, the real value of wages increased two and half times. These "long-wave" trends also affected development in the second half of the 14th century, but unevenly and with cyclical fluctuations. Prices of food increased in the 1350s, and also some more in the next decade, which was, of course, advantageous to farmers. However, in the 1370s and later, the prices began to drop whereas costs of agricultural production grew. The same held true for day laborers and their wages: they continued to grow. If the real wages of artisans and craftsmen since the Black Death to the end of the century grew by 50 percent, wages of agricultural workers grew probably even more.⁷

The catastrophic results of the plague in England became apparent with only a tiny delay. On some manors, the lords forced their subjects to cultivate abandoned lands, elsewhere they tried to increase taxes and impose new fees for various approvals and legal services. Majority of estates in the southwest of England (but also elsewhere) employed large numbers of hired workmen, whose supply fell short of the demand owing to the high mortality in previous years. Agricultural hired hands, therefore, routinely demanded (and received) wages twice

vom Mittelalters zur Neuzeit (Weimar, 1983). Also compare, among others, J.A. Raftis, 'Social Change versus Revolution: new Interpretations of the Peasant's Revolt of 1381', in *Social Unrest in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. F.X. Newmann (Binghamton, N. Y., 1986, pp. 3–22, collection *The English Rising of 1381*, R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston, eds. (Cambridge, 1987); H. Eiden, "In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren ...": Ursachen und Verlauf des englischen Bauernaufstandes von 1381 (Trier Historische Forschungen 32; Trier, 1995); A. Dunn, *The great rising of 1381: the peasants' revolt and England's failed revolution* (London, 2002) with Bibliography on pp. 157–161.

⁷ For more information see especially Hilton, *Bond Man Made Free*, chapt. V–VI and Idem, *Popular Movements in England at the End of the Fourteenth Century*, in *Il Tumulto dei Ciompi* (Firenze, 1981), pp. 231–232.

and three times higher than before. Already in June 1349, eleven months after the plague struck, parliament – comprised of large land magnates – issued the first of its directives regarding agricultural laborers. In 1351 they added a number of additional statutes (*Statute of Labourers*). Most importantly, the new legislative codified factual ownership of agricultural labor force, rather than its attachment to the land. The statutes also set maximum level of wages to 1346 levels and also forced laborers to keep to the length of contractually-agreed employment. In reality, all villagers, who did not cultivate a large enough land area, were bound by this obligation.

A special royal commission supervised the keeping of statutes in each region. After 1359 it merged with another regional body for maintaining peace. Whereas earlier the maintenance of justice and enforcement of interests of feudal lords was a matter for local authorities, now they were guaranteed by royal power. The statute concerning agricultural laborers thus not only worsened the living conditions of a great portion of the village population, but also, increasingly, fueled a hatred of royal commissions and their officials. The pressure imposed by central authority elicited a unanimous response, which crossed the borders of local manors.

Relationships between governing elite and common “people”⁸ worsened in the 1370s owing to the failure of military campaigns in France, political scandals and further increase of tax demands. Long-term wars proved a great burden on the villages, which were supposed to regularly send a set number of warriors and finance their arms and equipment. Among these warriors was perhaps also Wat Tyler, the hero of the uprising. He had allegedly gained military experience on the war fields in France. After twelve years without taxation, there followed a decade of new demands, which affected all level of the non-privileged third order in towns as well as in villages. A series of regular and irregular taxes began in 1371 with the so-called parish tax, which was in 1372 and 1373 followed by another regular tax, twice as high, and then again in 1374 and 1375. A poll tax, four pences per head for all persons older than fourteen, was imposed two years later; and in 1380 a regular tax of one and a half of the previous tax, which was then in

⁸ Hilton, *Popular Movements*, pp. 225n counts dependent and independent farmers, whom, along with the urban craftsmen, he considers to be a part of the potential revolutionary force, among the “people”. He classifies the merchant oligarchy and the patricians (*burgesses*) as the governing class. Also, unlike other authors, he does not see the middle and lower urban classes as dynamic threats to the feudal system. This thesis is undoubtedly controversial. See also A.F. Butcher, ‘English Urban Society and the Revolt of 1381’, in Hilton and Aston, eds., *The English Rising of 1381*, pp. 84–111.

1381 followed by another poll tax, this time of one shilling, which was a three day's wage. This poll tax proved especially burdensome for big families, not to speak of unscrupulous methods of royal tax collectors, who, among other things, examined whether or not girls were of taxable age by checking their virginity.

Of the synergy of various reasons, increased (and ever increasing) tax demands proved to be of the greatest importance whereas the other long-term crisis factors did not, in fact, acquired explosive force. Those who armed themselves and participated in the rebellions were not throngs of hungry paupers, but rather members of well-off peasant classes. In times of prosperity the confidence of farmers grew, but this newly-found confidence was not reflected in personal and other freedoms. Otherwise it would prove impossible to explain, why the rebels demanded them as part of their agenda. The growing economic difficulties created additional concerns, but it was the increase demands of the tax collector that most exacerbated the tensions. The fiscal policy of the governing clique thus proved short-sighted as it escalated the situation to a breaking point.⁹

The rebellion began at the end of May 1381, rather spontaneously, without much in the way of prior organization or a set agenda. Anyone, who knows anything about Wyclif and the influence of his teaching on Hus and his generation, must be surprised by this important fact. The teaching of the Oxford reformer was condemned by papal curia as erroneous in 1377 and 1378; Wyclif was still alive in 1381, but not only did he have nothing to do with the rebellion but even turned his back on it. Despite Wyclif's rejection of the rebellion, the rebels tried to put several points from Wyclif's own agenda in practice. This was the case not because the rebels were themselves directly acquainted with Wyclif's opinions – after all, his academic treatises circulated only on the university soil – but because

⁹ According to Hilton, *Popular Movements*, p. 232, the rebellions of the end of the 14th century can hardly be explained as merely a result of poverty and oppression. This idea is even more emphasized by N. Fryde, 'Die Krisen des Spätmittelalters in England in der angelsächsischen wirtschaftshistorischen Forschung der letzten zwanzig Jahre', in F. Seibt and W. Eberhard, eds., *Europa 1400. Die Krise des Spätmittelalters* (Stuttgart, 1984) pp. 174–175. To social and economic background to the Great Revolt of 1381 see also E.B. Fryde, *Peasants and landlords in later medieval England c. 1380 – c. 1525*, (New York, 1996), chapt. 3, pp. 29–53, and Eiden, „*In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren ...*“, pp. 12sq. England resembled the Czech lands with regards to the size of its towns and the dense network of townlets. Most authors are of the opinion that English towns were, at this time, undergoing a period of stagnation or even decline.

these opinions reflected what they already thought and felt.¹⁰ The demands of the rebels from June 14 were even more radical in that they ordered that the king confiscate all property of the church and divide it for the benefit of the laity, while Wyclif himself taught that properties only of disobedient prelates be confiscated. In both cases, the agents of this proposed secularization were supposed to be the lords or the king, but Wyclif did not envision that any reform initiative would come from among the people. Among his protectors was not only an influential member of the royal council, Duke of Lancaster John of Gaunt, but, at first, also the archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Sudbury. The attack on Gaunt's palace was one of the first acts of the rebels after their arrival to London, and archbishop Sudbury was executed a few days later as a representative of the hated regime of the governing coterie. And although Anglican isolationism was a thorn in the side of both the Avignon and the Roman popes, the English high clergy behaved at home in the same way that the continental high clergy behaved on the continent. Wyclif's reform advocated a profound improvement of the church and head members, but he did not wish to upset the foundations of the existing social order, in which the secular power continued to hold on to their privileges.¹¹

Not even the leaders of the uprising did wish to destroy the system of oppression. Influential and numerous class of wealthy farmers only wished to codify the obligation of lords and royal officials to respect older customary laws and to add a few more. Proclamations of equality made by the leading radical preacher John Ball most certainly effected a strong response, because they gave confidence to seditious masses in their struggle with the barons. However, these proclamations did not have time to inspire a radical parceling of the baron's estates. A feature of English popular mentality, the same as elsewhere, were hopes that the ruler is good and just, and that his ignorance of the true state of affairs was caused (and abused) by his advisers and administrators. Richard II (1377–1399) was only fourteen years old in 1381, and thus became an easy vessel for various such hopes and ideas. The most fantastic hope, which the leaders of the uprising envisioned, was a monarchy

¹⁰ Erroneous theories of Wyclif's influence on the ideology of the uprising are based on later pamphlets and polemics, which blamed the founders of the dangerous intellectual heresy also for the events of 1381. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, pp. 66–69 does not exclude the possibility that there is an internal kinship between Wyclif and the rebels. And although there is no vernacular word in his extant treatises, Wyclif was co-responsible for introducing the vernacular into theological discussions. See also, A. Hudson, 'Wyclif and the English Language', in A. Kenny, ed., *Wyclif in his times* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 85–103.

¹¹ Compare Töpfer, 'Die Wertung', pp. 59–65.

without any mediator between king and his subjects and a church with one archbishop, administering all the parish clergy directly. The exclusion of secular and clerical aristocracy from the political scene was an important idea, but was not well-thought out, as far as any practical functioning of the future administrative system was concerned. The ideals of the Hussite left would later share in the same weakness; their egalitarian ideas will also lack clear proposals for how to conduct the political life on the practical level.¹²

It is worth noting that the ideological substratum of the rebellion bears no discernible traces of popular heresy. There were about dozen attempts to curb the activities of individual preachers and clergymen since the beginning of the 14th century to the year 1381, but not a single one had anything to do with heresy in the strict sense of the word. The same also holds true of John Ball, who spent several years in the prison of archbishops of Canterbury. The social agenda of his cryptic letters and sermons did not exceed the ideas encapsulated in Langland's well-known *Piers Plowman*, which most likely channeled ideas of popular discontent and desires of the common people. John Ball, with his critical invective and ardent desire to return to the principles of early Christianity, was not an exception among the English clergy, which a survey of contemporary preachers' drafts makes abundantly clear.¹³ It was not only poor clerics, who were discontent with their subordinate position. Some wealthy parish priests, motivated by an awakened biblicism, were also among the critics of the society and even among direct participants in the rebellion.¹⁴

Although visionary or prophetic voices were not lacking in the contemporary popular opinion, the rebel struggles lacked that religious fervor and exaltation, which we know from the Czech chiliasts. Events associated with the attack on the fancy residence of a hated aristocrat John of Gaunt show that the rebels did not need religion as a source for their discipline and self-awareness. The family of the duke, who was staying in Scotland at the time, was allowed to walk free, but the

¹² On the goals and programme of the rising see Hilton, *Popular Movements*, chap. 9 and Mothes, *England im Umbruch*, pp. 42 and 77.

¹³ An analysis of six pamphlets of John Ball was published by S. Justice, *Writing and rebellion. England in 1381* (Berkeley, 1994).

¹⁴ For more information on the ideological context of the English revolt, see important scholarly studies by A. Hudson, *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Cambridge, 1978) and by M. Aston, *Lollards and Reformers. Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984); *Faith and fire. Popular and unpopular religion, 1350–1600* (London, 1993). Other literature is cited by Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 526–537.

rebel leaders also threatened them with the death penalty for robbery. All jewels and valuables were broken to pieces and then thrown into the Thames. Secular and distinctly non-religious atmosphere of the rebellion is even more evident in the two set of demands put before the king.¹⁵

The petition from June 13, 1381 contained four demands; abolition of servitude (including all corvee and taxation), general amnesty for rebels, freedom of trade in the whole kingdom and land rent to be at maximum four pences per acre. The last article made it clear that the institution of land ownership was to remain untouched. But the more radical program from the next day demanded confiscation of clerical properties and their division according to the needs of each parish. Moreover, the second petition demanded the abolition of all laws, with the exception of the directive of king Edward I from 1285, who, in the interest of protection of all subjects against violence, allowed all adult males to bear arms. The rebels thus hoped to abolish also the onerous statute regarding agricultural laborers from 1351. Also, the rebels were characterized by distaste for lawyers and administrative officials working in the service of the king and barons. In many places, farmers burnt official registers of the aristocracy containing administrative records of taxes and other duties of the subjects. The Hussite era knew nothing of this kind at all, although the rejection of “pagan” (that is Roman) as well as German law were a part of the ideological arsenal of the Taborite left. In comparison with the Hussite movement, the English reform agendas were characterized by pragmatism and concreteness of their social and political demands, which was also the case for the revolt of the Ciompi. However, both these movements lacked utopian visions of a society without lords and subjects, which we know from Hussite chiliasm.

The main demands of both petitions reflect the social profile of the rebels. The interests of middle urban classes were faintly reflected in the article about the freedom of trade. In the rapid progression of events, small craftsmen and artisans lost their heads, could not make up their mind and come up with their own demands. Generally, they liked slogans about freedoms, because only one fourth of London dwellers, for example, enjoyed the benefits of burghership. Unconditional allies of the rebels in the metropolis were only plebeians, and it was them who opened the gates and who joined their crowds in attacks on the

¹⁵ On the petitions, see R.H. Hilton, ‘Soziale Programme im englischen Aufstand von 1381’, in R. Blickle, ed., *Revolte und Revolution in Europa* (München, 1975), pp. 31–46.

prisons and palaces of court aristocracy. Members of higher classes were few among the rebels; unlike in the Hussite rebellion, in England gentry remained uninvolved.¹⁶ Territorially speaking, the English revolt from 1381 had almost national character, but it did not engulf all classes, but mostly the third order, that is more precisely, the common people.¹⁷

Similarly to the jacquerie, the English revolt began as a local incident. At the end of May of 1381, inhabitants of several villages in the Duchy of Essex refused to pay the tax which they owed and, having armed themselves, put the tax collectors there to flight. In the course of a few days, the spirit of revolt engulfed all of Essex and moved to the neighbouring Kent. A detachment of soldiers and officials, who were supposed to restore order and punish the rebels, only fueled the popular discontent, which turned into direct attacks against royal fortresses and feudal mansions. Already on June 5, the rebels captured the citadel in Kent and a few days later they seized Canterbury, the seat of archbishop Sudbury. In the meantime, the rebels in Essex attacked farm-houses of the knight order of Johannites, whose grand master, as the king's treasurer, had the worst reputation of all.

After the rescue of preacher John Ball from prison in Maidstone, the rebel army under the leadership of local countryman Wat Tyler headed for London. On June 12, throngs of farmers from Essex and Kent converged near the capital and demanded to be met directly by the king. Young Richard II sailed in the direction of the rebels, but their wild shouting terrified his retinue and the meeting did not take place. And although the royal council under the leadership of city magistrate William Walworth had issued security measures, some of the aldermen sympathized with the rebels and facilitated their entry into the city.¹⁸

¹⁶ More in J.A. Tuck, 'Nobles, Commons and the Great Revolt of 1381', in *The English Rising of 1381*, pp. 194–212.

¹⁷ On the subject of social composition of the rebels, see a detailed account in Hilton, *Bond Man Made Free*, chap. 7, also in chap. 8 about allies from ranks of lower urban clergy. Mothes, *England im Umbruch*, p. 81, thinks that parish proletariat, craftsmen, day-laborers, several knights, who used the rebellion to enrich themselves, as well as a group of wealthy farmers and officials, were allies of the rebels. Many questions were addressed in the course of the discussion during the anniversary conference of the journal *Past and Present* in July 1981 (see the proceedings *The English Rising of 1381*). Other controversial points are addressed by Raftis, *Social Change versus Revolution*, pp. 6–13.

¹⁸ Theodora Büttner attempted to trace and analyze the social struggles in London during the uprising in her: 'Die sozialen Kämpfe in London während des englischen Bauernaufstandes 1381', in E. Engelmann, ed., *Städtische Volksbewegungen im 14. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1960), pp. 116–142. For information about the attitudes of towns, see also Butcher, 'English Urban Society'.

The rebels along with their London allies behaved in rather orderly manner, burning down brothels belonging to the city magistrate as well as administrative records in the courthouse. They also opened prison gates. The royal council in the besieged Tower forced Richard to promise in vague terms the reparation of all grievances and mercy for the rebels, provided that the villagers return to their homes. The intention was to appease the rebels, remove them from London, and then disperse them. Reports saying that some eighty thousand rebels took part in the rebellion are probably exaggerated, but it is clear that so many farmers poured into London that the court had to retreat and maneuver.

Scenes from June 14 and 15 do not lack a dramatic touch. The king agreed to meet the rebels in the village Mile End, where, speaking with them face to face, he agreed with all their demands. As a proof of his good-will he ordered his thirty scribes, who were present, to issue documents regarding the abolition of servitude and pardon of all crimes. A portion of the farmers, having received a written guarantee, immediately began their return home. In this regard, the royal council achieved a great success. In the meantime, Tyler's group entered the Tower and enforced the executions of the most hated lords and officials: The revolt culminated and ended in the same moment. The royal faction took control of the situation from then on, thanks to their ability to mobilize armed detachments, which were able to put down the rebels, whose numbers had by now thinned significantly.

Ostensibly, the king agreed to meet Tyler again and accepted, on June 15, an even more radical version of the petition. Tyler, after being lured away from his army, was murdered by the city magistrate Walworth. Richard II, in order to mollify the rebels, who were by now becoming increasingly confused, notified them that he had knighted Tyler and granted all the demands of the petition. Their fears thus having been assuaged, the rebels departed, as told, to a specified location for future negotiations. But when they saw the head of their leader on a spear, they panicked, fell on their knees and awaited their fate. The village and urban people who had congregated in London almost swept the king and his courtly coterie aside, into the Thames. But their blind faith in the royal ruler and his honest intentions thwarted all that which had, for a fleeting moment, seemed to be within reach.

Elsewhere, the rebellion remained to pose a threat. Townspeople and village-people, who rose up against monastic elites in St. Albans (Hertfordshire), held out for another month. Around mid-June, farmers in Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk

and Cambridgeshire also rebelled.¹⁹ There was violence everywhere, not even the university in Cambridge was spared. With the exception of east England and neighboring areas, where the London poor joined the rebellion, thus strengthening it, other epicenters held their ground only because the royal armies could not fight on all sides at once. In the eastern duchies, barons, led by the militant bishop of Norwich, managed to break the resistance in late June. Preacher Ball was quartered before the eyes of the king and his court on July 15, the same fate was reserved also for further leaders of the rebels. The last strongholds of the rebels in Kent were not captured until September.

The opinions on the long-term results of the rebellion vary.²⁰ It is generally thought that the subsequent social and economic development was neither accelerated nor slowed down by the attempts of the rebels. It is necessary though to hear also the opposing view, which argues that the revolts of the subsequent decades were a proof of untiring popular activity and of a desire for freedom.²¹ The origins and expansion of the Lollard movement seem to confirm this view.

Heresy was not in England an ideological foundation for rebellion, but the rebellion opened a free field of activity to domestic heresy with a broad social response. After the rebellion drowned in blood, the religious non-conformists raised their head and plotted an exit strategy, complete with new hopes. The hopes did not, however, focus on the sphere of early material benefits and freedoms, but on the long-term, distant perspective of the afterlife.²² It appeared that any struggle against landed magnates and royal officials lost its chance for success, but the struggle for church reform was in its very infancy and even the crushed rebellion did not take the wind out of its sails, as it were. The church was well aware of this danger and, in 1382, hastened to issue edicts against Wyclif and his

¹⁹ I cannot go into detail here nor can I list all the works, which treat the rebellion in the individual duchies. Most recently, see D. Crook, 'Derbyshire and the English Rising of 1381', *Historical Research*, lx, Nr. 141 (2007), pp. 9–23.

²⁰ According to W.M. Omrod, 'The peasants' revolt and the government of England', *Journal of British Studies*, xxix (1999), pp. 1–30; the reform demands of the gentry and peasantry, which had been unsuccessful, appeared again in the crisis years of 1386–1388.

²¹ On the conflicting views of the results of the uprising, see Hilton, *Bond Man Made Free*, pp. 293–295. According to Ormod, 'The peasants' revolt', the lenience of the government after quelling the revolt of 1381 was a result of middle-class pressures. The demands of the gentry and peasantry were formally accepted, but not implemented in practice.

²² More in C.V. Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards. Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Leiden, 1998).

followers. The Oxford heretic did not, at any point, change his view the division of medieval society into three orders, nor did he ceased to undermine the dogmas and subvert the foundations of the secular power of the church institutions. It is not entirely true that his academic deductions were intelligible only to a handful of chosen Latinists. Wyclif had the good will to spread his views also in the vernacular, also trying to make the Bible accessible in English to literate laymen. The first set of translations of the Bible into English began probably at Wyclif's own instigation.²³

It was a small group of his pupils, who took on the main onus of this task, and translated many of their teacher's theses into the vernacular. They did not limit themselves to those, and in a short time they, drawing on both local and foreign sources, put together a wide reservoir of ambitious ideas for a new heresy, which came to be called Lollardy. This mocking term for the new heresy came from the Netherlands, where this was the nickname for Beghards. And because English heretics also quietly sang (lollen) in their secret meetings, the pejorative nickname soon took root in the clerical circles.

The teachings of the Lollards were far from systematic.²⁴ Its diversity and openness to contemporary ideas was probably attractive for a relatively wide circle of followers. While the working class in towns and villages formed the fertile soil of the movement, numerous poor "angry" clerics were among the movement's propagators. In some places the Lollards had the support of influential members of the aristocracy, who from religious or other motives found themselves near the edge of heresy.²⁵ Anticlericalism as well as general demands for a poor church were

²³ On Wyclif's attitudes towards the rebellion, see Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, pp. 66–69. See pp. 238–247 for a survey of unfinished discussion on Wyclif's participation in the translation of the biblical books to English. Based on the textual and critical analyses, the author thinks it virtually impossible that Wyclif was involved in the undertaking in any decisive way. For anthology of basic texts and commentary, see Hudson, *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*.

²⁴ On the extensive literature about the Lollard teaching, see G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester – New York 1967), kap. VIII; Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, chap. 14; F. Seibt, 'Cabochiens, Lollarden. Hussiten. Zur sogenannten Krise des Spätmittelalters im europäischen Vergleich', *Francia*, xii (1984), pp. 209–221. Older findings were corrected and enriched by Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, whose work is authoritative on most questions pertaining to the history of the Lollard movement.

²⁵ For more information about noble followers of the Lollards, see the study by K.B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford, 1972), and, more recently, M. Aston and C. Richmond, eds., *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1997). On the social status of the Lollards, see Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, p. 121n.

near everyone's heart, with the exception of prelates. In their rejection of the sacrament of clerical ordination and in several other matters, for example, in their fundamental abhorrence of images and pilgrimages, the Lollards went further than Wyclif himself. In their rejection of clerical celibacy, they fought for moral purification more consequentially, not least due to the strong influence of devout women in the movement.²⁶ With its main articles as well as its moral appeal, which at times reached levels of puritan asceticism, Lollardy shared a number of common elements with the Hussite movement. The contacts between the reform circles in Bohemia and England were surprisingly common from the very beginning, even though it was rather Wyclif's teachings, which made the link between them, and not, as many might think, mutual borrowings of their program articles.

The twelve theses, which the Lollards posted on the door of Westminster Hall during the parliamentary session in 1395, provoked a strong wave of repression, which six years later resulted in official decree of death penalty to all heretics.²⁷ The peasant rebellion was not forgotten, so the manifest, which had very boldly, it seemed, been presented by "poor people," brought the lords of royal council and of the parliament to a boiling point. The twelve theses were, however, characterized by pacifism that was readily apparent; they did not call for any kind of resistance against the crown or secular aristocracy. Gradually, however, a conviction grew inside the movement that it would not be possible to reach any kind of redress without a "just fight." This thinking is present, not by accident, in the Lollard treatise *The Lanterne of Light* from 1409–1415; its writing coincided with the unsuccessful revolt, initiated by Sir John Oldcastle, lord of Cobham. The deviation from pacifism grew out of the need for defense against the threat of burning stakes, but also from personal convictions of several high-born supporters of the

²⁶ On the women's question in the Lollard movement, most recently, wrote Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, pp. 137, 186–187, who included a list of older literature.

²⁷ The twelve theses (conclusions) were published by Hudson, *English Wycliffite Writings*, pp. 24–29. More on the subject by F. Somerset, 'Answering the Twelve Conclusions: Dymmok's Halfhearted Gestures Towards Publications', in Aston and Richmond, eds., *Lollardy and the Gentry*, pp. 52–76. More recently and inspiratively, also W. Scase, 'The Audience and Framers of the Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards', in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale* (as note 5), pp. 283–301. The knowledge of the Lollard theses in Bohemia is confirmed by collection authorities, whose shorter version, so-called *Rosarius*, was erroneously ascribed to Matthew of Zvolen. Independently, this subject was touched by A. Hudson, 'A Lollard Compilation in England and Bohemia', *Journal of Theological Studies* N. S., xxv (1974) and J. Kejíř, 'Rosarius – domnělé dílo slovenského husity', *Studie o rukopisech*, xiv (1975), pp. 83–110, and J. Kejíř, 'Ještě jednou o Rosariu', *ibidem*, xv (1976), pp. 103–106.

movement, who were forced into political opposition against the king and royal court.²⁸

The name of Sir Oldcastle begins to appear in the inquisitorial sources in 1410. His sympathies to the Lollards were of an older date and did not prevent him from a successful career at court. However, his friendly relations with the Prince of Wales, alongside whom he fought in France, cooled considerably, when his friend and protector became the king of England as Henry V. Oldcastle was accused of owning banned heretical books. He admitted to the charge, to the astonishment of the king, and later ventured to defend the principles of the Lollard teachings before the archbishop's court. The king hesitated to punish his close ally, and Oldcastle was thus able to escape from the Tower thanks to the help of London Lollards. The crisis of the political system as well as the riots in Wales and in Scotland both appeared to him to be a good opportunity for decisive action. According to Oldcastle's plan, the king and his family were to be taken hostage and their royal residence occupied, which would enable the Lollard theses to be legislated into practice. Whether it was Oldcastle's intention to put an end to the monarchy and execute its representatives including the king, of which he was later accused, cannot be proved. The beginning of the rebellion, in which some twenty thousand men from all of England were to take part, was set for the night of January 9, 1414. The rebellion was, however, betrayed before the conspirators even had the chance to congregate in St. Giles Fields in the vicinity of London. The royal military assaulted and dispersed them. Immediately afterwards the royal commission sentenced sixty nine prisoners to death. Oldcastle managed to escape again, and although Henry promised him mercy, he remained in defiant resistance until December 1417, when he was executed.²⁹

The English Lollards gained information about the Prague reform movement from Czech students who came to Oxford and elsewhere with the intention to copy Wyclif's tractates. They discovered, to their pleasant surprise, that they were

²⁸ Regarding the original Lollard pacifism and its gradual shift towards violent revolt, see M. Aston, 'Lollardy and Sedition 1381–1431', *Past and Present*, xvii (1960), pp. 1–44, reprinted in: Aston, *Lollards and Reformers* (see note 14), pp. 1–47.

²⁹ For introductory information about the rebellion of John Oldcastle and its effects, see Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 284–294, and Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, according to the index. Seibt, Cabochiens, Lollarden, Hussiten, p. 197, classified this revolt as belonging to the series of "estates' revolutions".

not alone in their reform attempts. In letters, which they, in September 1410, wrote to John Hus, Voksa of Valdštejn and their friends, they praised the eagerness of the Czech adherents to God's law and encouraged them, lest they, as good knights of Jesus Christ, slacken in their struggles against the weakening Antichrist. One of the writers of the two extant letters, lord John Oldcastle, ended, as we know, at the gallows in 1417. The writer of the second letter, the tireless preacher Richard Wyche was burnt by domestic inquisition in June 1440. According to Anne Hudson's skillful analysis, the two reform-minded groups had unexpectedly numerous contacts at the beginning of the 15th century, of which little was previously known. Czech Wycliffites around Hus and Jerome of Prague gained, with the help of English non-conformist clerics, access to Wyclif's treatises that were previously unknown or inaccessible and, in return, offered their sympathies.³⁰ Contemporaneously, in March 1411, four "Scottish" letters written by a certain Quentin Folkhyrd, a made-up knight, who masked some unknown Lollard fanatic. Peter Payne was the only English Wycliffite, who came to Bohemia and made his home there and, in return for his work in the service of the Czech reformation, was given the honor to defend one of the four Hussite articles at the council of Basel.³¹

The proceedings of the Council of Constance evoked a general sense of alertness against all followers of the Oxford reformer, and disrupted direct contacts between the English Lollards and Czech Wycliffites. That meant that Hussite Bohemia did not repay its debt and did not enrich the ideological arsenal of the Lollard movement any farther. With the same perseverance, with which Lollardy resisted the continual inquisitorial meddling, it also retained its early doctrinal visions and forms, whose effect would be strengthened by adoptions of Hussite

³⁰ Hus's correspondence with the Lollards was published by V. Novotný, *M. Jana Husi korespondence a dokumenty* (Praha, 1920), pp. 73–86, N° 21, 22 and 24. Regarding the person of Richard Wyche, see Ch. von Nolcken, 'Richard Wyche, a Certain Knight, and the Beginning of the End', in Aston and Richmond, eds., *Lollardy and the Gentry*, pp. 127–154, and especially A. Hudson, 'Which Wyche? The Framing of the Lollard heretic and/or Saint', in P. Biller and C. Bruschi, eds., *Texts and the Repression of Medieval Heresy* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 221–237.

³¹ The so-called Scottish letters were made available by J. Sedlák, *M. Jan Hus* (Praha, 1915), pp. 182–196, N° XIV. Regarding Fulkhyrd or Folkhyrd, see Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, p. 126. The state of research on the missionary activities of Peter Payne is described by F. Šmahel, 'Magister Peter Payne: Curriculum vitae eines englischen Nonkonformisten', in A. de Lange and K. Utz Tresp, eds., *Friedrich Reiser und die „waldensisch-hussitische Internationale“ im 15. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg – Ubstadt – Weiher – Basel, 2006), pp. 241–260.

reform practices and their means of propaganda and based on educational songs. Lollardy did not resonate with Utraquism, and a certain similarity between the ideas of William White (burnt in 1428) and other Lollards from Norfolk and Suffolk and the decision of the Tábora synod from November 1424 was probably entirely a coincidence.³²

An isolated attempt to build up contacts from the Czech side did not end well for its instigator. Pavel of Kravaře, master of the university in Paris and bachelor of medicine from Montpellier, appears in the sources as an inconsistent personality. In May 1416 he was admitted College of Masters at the Prague Faculty of Arts, but in the end found employment in the royal court in the Catholic city of Krakow. In the beginning of 1432 he lived in Prussia, from where he attempted to have an audience with the king Jagiełło, in order to acquaint him with the “divine mysteries revealed to him”. As far as Hussite articles were concerned, he chose a somewhat tortuous route for their propagation. He was, however considered a Hussite in Scotland, where in July 23, 1433 he was burnt in the abbey of Saint Andrews. English Lollards continued to sympathize with the Hussites and when another collection of indulgences was launched, this time in support of the crusade of cardinal Henry Beaufort in 1428, they resisted it both in secret and in public. A certain Ralph Mungyn was prosecuted on this occasion for saying that “it is not permitted to raise arms against declared heretics, who in large numbers rose up in the kingdom of Bohemia.” The tribunal most likely doctored the pejorative part of the statement, and Mungyn denied the accusations.³³

Lollardy was crushed neither by the failure of the rebellion nor by the subsequent wave of inquisitional prosecutions. Aristocratic supporters may have dis-

³² A definite answer to the question whether or not contacts between Lollards and Hussites continued after 1415 were not found even by Hudson herself, *The Premature Reformation*, p. 515. On the common features between White and articles of Tábora synods, see p. 289, on the negative attitude of Lollardy to Utraquism, see p. 289, and on the interrogations of Ralph Mungyn, see p. 369. On the interrogations of the above-mentioned Mungyn, see also A. Neumann, ‘Ohlas husitství v Evropě’, *Časopis katolického duchovenstva*, lxxv (1924), pp. 249–258.

³³ The fate of Pavel of Kravaře in Scotland was described by F. Bednář, ‘Pavel z Kravaře’, *Časopis Matice Moravské*, xxxix (1915), pp. 67–76 and M. Spinka, ‘Paul Kravar and the Lollard-Hussite Relations’, *Church History*, xxv (1956), pp. 16–26. F.M. Bartoš added a number of biographical details in his, *Husitství a cizina* (Praha, 1931), pp. 214–217; on the subject of his possible authorship of several tractates, see L. Moonan, ‘Pavel Kravar, and some writings once attributed to him’, *The Innes Review*, xxvii (1976), pp. 3–23.

appeared, but the movement made itself felt not only in the more economically developed duchies in the south, between Dover and Bristol, but also in London and in the north in Lincoln and Norwich.³⁴ In 1431, Lollardy made itself heard again in an attempted rebellion and its spirit of revolt continued until 1520s.³⁵ For comparative studies of the Hussite movement, Lollardy remains especially important because it reached, both in theory and in practice, violent enforcement of its reform goals. Lollardy was a reform movement of wider influence, not only a sect. The Hussite movement reached further in many respects. Had it not been for its victories against crusading armies, it would not have been granted acceptance at the council of Basel and the Hussites would meet similar inquisitorial prosecutions as the Lollards. I will close with words of Anne Hudson on Lollardy: “In England Lollardy was demoted on the political agenda in the face of other pressing issues. But in Bohemia the ironical force of the little local difficulty would not be lost for many further years.”³⁶

³⁴ On late Lollardy, see J.A.F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards, 1414–1520* (Oxford, 1965), also Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 288–305, with a detailed map of epicenters, and most recently, F. Somereset, J.C. Havens and D.G. Pittard, eds., *The Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2003).

³⁵ For more information about the rebellion of spring 1431, see, among others, Aston, *Lollardy and Seditio*, pp. 24n. Regarding a subsequent rebellion led by Jack Cade in 1450, see Mothes, *England im Umbruch*, p. 172f.

³⁶ See A. Hudson, ‘Lollardy: a little local difficulty?’, in *Vita religiosa e identità politiche: Universalità e particolarismi nell’Europa del tardo medioevo*, a cura di S. Gensini (Pisa, 1998), pp. 513–526, here p. 526. Cf. M. Aston, ‘Were the Lollards a Sect?’, in P. Biller and B. Dobson, eds., *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy, and the Religious Life* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 163–191.