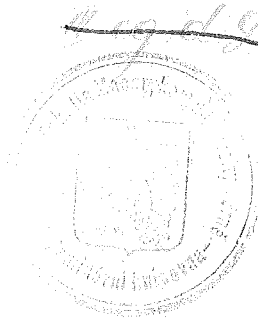


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MEMORANDUM
OF THE
EVANGELICAL CHURCH
OF BOHEMIAN BRETHREN
TO THE GOVERNMENTS AND CHURCHES
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE
UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA
IN THE QUESTION OF TESCHEN



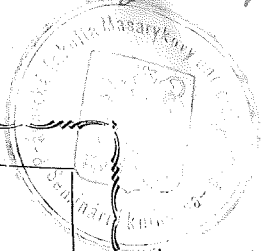
PRAGUE 1920.

PUBLISHED BY THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH
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PRINTED BY THE „POLITKA“.

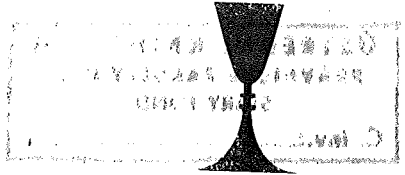
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their historical mission in the world, which is the protectorate over the inheritance of the Reformation.

The Reformation in Poland was the child of the Bohemian Reformation and throughout its entire duration displayed the indications of this inward relationship. The greatest poet of Poland, Jan Kochanowski, derived his inspiration from the immortal beauty attained by the spiritual movement of the Bohemian Reformation. Kochanowski became in his turn the fountain head of all subsequent Polish poetry, which in this way, owed its main form to Bohemia. Bohemia, moreover, defended her Reformation with all her being. It was torn from her only over the lifeless form of the Czech people and the Czech State. Poland, on the contrary, gave back the Reformation into the hands of Rome in the manner as an adopted child might be handed back. And yet it is, above all, the Polish Reformation which, being, as a part of the Reformation a manifestation of the highest form of inner freedom of a nation submitting to it and establishing thus its personality, forms the real title to self-determination of the Polish nation as a state. Since, then, the Polish Reformation is derived from the Bohemian, the Polish title to self-determination is really derived from the Bohemian, and is, in comparison with the original Bohemian title, a derivative one. It is the Czechs who supplied the foundation idea for the acknowledgment of Poland in international law. Poland, in resigning this foundation idea, resigns at the same time her sole claim to independence.

Silesia belonged, it is true, till the 13th century to Poland, but then voluntarily united with Bohemia in union with which it began to create its spiritual life and to elaborate its character. The Bohemian Reformation took such a hold of the whole of Upper Silesia and especially of Teschen, that these regions quickly co-operated in the common task of the Bohemian Reformation and from their ranks there issued men of God and Prophets, without whom the Bohemian Reformation is but a torso. Teschen in particular quickly consolidated with the remaining territories of the Czech nation in their Reformation ideas and accepted

an active role in common with them in the work of religious creation. As a symbol of this unity and co-operation we may regard the figure of George Tranovsky. He was born in Teschen in the year 1591 and laboured chiefly at the time when the Reformation in Bohemia, in Moravia and to a certain extent in Silesia was being subjected to oppression. His Hymn Book, the Cithara Sanctorum is one of the corner stones of the fabric of Bohemian Protestant faith, one of the most subjective expressions of it during the period round the year 1620, and which, extending its influence to Slovakia was instrumental in sealing the religious unity of Bohemia and Slovakia on the basis of the Reformation. In Teschen too there was born in the year 1701 John Liberda, one of the most conspicuous figures of Bohemian Protestantism in the days of the Counter-Reformation, the organiser of the so-called „Hidden seed“ in Bohemia as well as of its spreading beyond the frontiers. No one succeeded as he did in personifying the idea of Protestantism after the defeat of the White Mountain, preserving in the symbol of the so called Faith of the Lamb — the substance of the Bohemian Reformation, that is the enthusiastic permeation of the person of Christ — the Messianic yearnings of that day and its eschatology: no one succeeded as he in preserving the continuity of the Bohemian genius at a period of the most terrible persecution. He laboured thus not only in Teschen but also throughout all Bohemia. In this way Teschen contributed substantially to the common fund of the national Bohemian genius. Without the co-operation of Teschen the fabric of the Bohemian Reformation and Bohemian spiritual work would have been incomplete and the spiritual territory of the Bohemian nation would have been the poorer by a substantial part which brought forth fruits essential for Bohemian spiritual life as a whole. The fact that during the creative period of Bohemia's national genius — the Reformation period — Teschen co-operated in the creation of that period, and that too substantially by contributing fundamental religious values, and that its territory was thus an indispensable sphere for the revelation of the Bohemian genius

— these facts furnish most important material for the argument that by the right of self-determination (which means self-determination in the sphere of ideas) Teschen appertains in essence to the Spiritual Czech massif and as this massif is the foundation of the Czech political structure, so Teschen forms part of this structure.

Figures like those of Liberda, Tranovsky and their collaborators as well as that of a second Tranovsky named George Joanides of Frydek, arising on a territory so limited in area, bear witness to the intensity of religious life in Teschen, how close its spiritual identity with the other Czech lands, indeed with the whole of Czechoslovakia.

As a result of this spiritual identity with the whole totality of Bohemia Teschen took an active part in the political life of Bohemia at this time as also in the rebellion of 1618. The Teschen troops fought to the last man at the Battle of the White Mountain and the inhabitants of Teschen bore with brave courage all the consequences which this battle had for Bohemia. Such a fact is an absolute legal title to the demand that Teschen shall remain politically permanently attached to the Czech massif.

When, as a result of the Treaty of Altranstadt in 1707 by which that heroic man of God, Charles XII, protected the Protestants of Silesia, the Protestants of Teschen were, in 1709, granted the so-called Church of Grace at Teschen, the public performance of Protestant rites and of Protestantism was celebrated in Teschen in the traditional Bohemian form and Czech traditions immediately manifested themselves in the Protestantism of Teschen as it was once more now openly confessed in Teschen. The charter by which the first governing body of this church was appointed and which was signed by the leaders of the Protestant nobility there, is couched in the style of the Bohemian Reformation. At the opening services people had assembled from every district of Teschen, even from the East, in great numbers, and they sang the old Czech hymns. The Church of Teschen became the refuge of the Protestants of Bohemia and Moravia who just in the first half of

the 18th century were so cruelly persecuted, Protestantism being regarded as a *crimen status*. Whoever could, came at least once to Teschen to take part in worship and to bear home strength and encouragement for himself and those about him. This church so flourished that the Hidden seed never perished from among the Czech people but lived on till the Patent of Tolerance of the year 1781, especially in the neighbouring district inhabited by the Slavic Wallachs where Protestant conviction was so deep that Protestant uprisings took place just before 1780 and it was in reality these which forced Joseph II to issue his Patent of Tolerance. The town of Teschen itself, then, is one of the towns most sacred to Bohemian Protestantism and vies with Husinetz, Trostnov, and the White Mountain in calling to the Protestant mind memories of the time when Protestantism bore a crown of thorns. The handing over of such a town to the worshippers of the Virgin Mary of Czenstochova would constitute the gravest offence to Bohemian Protestant sentiment and would be all the more keenly felt from the fact that it would be your hands, the hands of brothers in One Faith that would have caused it.

This intimate connection with the Bohemian Reformation lived on into the 19th century when, in 1848 the year of Revolution a religious movement having its origin in the traditions of the Bohemian Brethren began among the Protestants and Catholics of Teschen. Such was the consciousness of the people there of their identity with the Bohemian Brethren that they demanded to be grouped in Brotherhood congregations professing the Faith of the Lamb. Among the people there had still survived traditions of the Brotherhood kept alive by their books preserved among the people. Subsequent to 1848 small groups of such Bohemian Brethren continued to grow in number throughout Teschen. Up to the present day, therefore, there exists in Teschen a conscious religious identity with the entire national body of the Czechs, a consciousness of spiritual identity and mutual effort with it.

Not only in this respect but also in respect of State rights and rights in general Teschen forms one single entity with the

other Czech lands. The Reformation saw from the very beginning in the Bohemian state and law an instrument for accomplishing its spiritual task and so it came about that it filled with its vitality all the institutions and functions of the State so that the Czech idea found also legal expression. In the same way we see, too, in Teschen, that on the Reformation penetrating there, that land accepted the inner organism of the Czech State and identified itself with it. It was, then, only the Bohemian Reformation which was able to cement the state union of Teschen with Bohemia. And, as the Reformation penetrated completely into Teschen — and that exclusively as a ray of the Bohemian Reformation, so it could not regard Teschen otherwise than as a constituent part of the State organism. This view is further borne out by the fact that at the time of the Reformation all the Bohemian institutions and laws were adopted in Teschen. They are to be found in a code entitled The Rights and Institutions of the Principality of Teschen. In this way the constitutional relations of Teschen to the Crown of Bohemia received their true contents corresponding to the legal idea by which, as a deduction from its historical-religious idea, the whole Czech nation lived not only in respect of public but also in respect of private rights. So is founded the identity of Bohemian genius on the territory of Teschen too in the sphere of rights and laws which constitutes an exact index of the consciousness of national identity which endured down to the latest times. In the year of Revolution 1848 at national meetings held both in Prague and in Teschen, the incorporation of Teschen into the State unity was demanded together with the renewal of the rights of the Bohemian Crown. The unity of Teschen with the whole territory of the Bohemian Crown in regard of State rights was even acknowledged in the Silesian Diet as late as 1898 by the Polish deputies too. During the entire period all constitutional and international acts touching Teschen were based on this consciousness on the sphere of rights. Teschen was always granted as a fief of the Bohemian Crown and with its consent, and on the extinction of the Diast dynasty in 1653 it reverted to

the Crown. When Bilsko, the Eastern part of Teschen, was granted out in the 18th century as a particular fief it was designated a Bohemian fief. The legal appurtenance of Teschen to the Bohemian Crown was expressly emphasised in the Coronation ceremonial from 1792, the form of doing homage to the King and the coat of arms of Bohemia of the year 1806 and 1836.

Hussitism as it was individually experienced in Teschen as a new birth of the national mind, brought about a Czechisation of the entire public administration and of intercourse generally, Latin and German till that time having been employed.

The Czech language was, from the time of the Reformation till the system of Germanisation introduced by the Habsburgs in the 18th century repressed it, the exclusive official language and the vernacular throughout all Teschen. Even after the Germanising measures of Joseph II it contrived to keep its place of co-equal beside the German as the language used in the offices of state.

All this legal consequence of the Bohemian Reformation in Teschen may be expressed as follows: that down from the days of the Hussites the character of Teschen has been exclusively Bohemian.

Deep and many-sided has been the national unity of Teschen with the entire Czech national body as a whole since the 15th century. Teschen was Czech by conviction even in those parts which today, owing to the influence of Church, School and communal boards, have been Polonised. Until quite recently the Protestants of Teschen were conscious of deriving their origin from the Bohemian Reformation. They clung to the Czech language up to the last few years as the language of their congregations in the agenda, canciones, hymns and melodies: it was only by force that the Polish language was everywhere introduced into the Church services. In the churches so Polonised Czech hymns and melodies were often kept up. It shews how strong can be the consciousness of national unity when founded on the Bible.

The schools, too, throughout all Teschen were Czech till the

middle of the 19th century. In the year 1843 there were 84 Czech, 17 German, and 27 combined Czech and German schools — but not one Polish school. Polonisation was encouraged by successive Austrian Governments as a means to Germanisation. Polonised schools were largely converted into German ones. German ecclesiastics, whether Protestant or Catholic, supported the Polonisation of Protestant congregations and Catholic villages, desiring in this way to cut off Silesian Protestantism from the soil — the Bohemian soil — whence it drew its sustenance, and to protect Silesian Catholics from Hussite influences which even in a Catholicised Bohemia have never died out. It was hoped in this way easily to Germanise both parties. With the same object in view the Polish language was introduced into the municipal and local offices and Polonisation frequently led directly to Germanisation so that even the administrative offices of Polonised communities are German. In Teschen there are at this moment 206 Slav communities, 51 of which are not Polonised and are under Czech administration. Of the remaining 149 where the majority of inhabitants are Polonised, 96 have German as the official language, Polish being used in 53 only.

The Polonisation of the public offices, the schools and the churches is thus no proof of the growth of a Polish national consciousness; it did not spring from a dormant vital primary force of the Polish element for no such thing ever existed. On the contrary this Polonisation was artificially brought about subsequent to the years 1848—1860 by means of a secular and ecclesiastical system of Germanisation which utilised the cry of Polonisation for the object of driving out the Czech element, rightly foreseeing that the Polish element, thus artificially brought into being and nourished without its own participation would suffer itself to be much more easily Germanised than the more independent Czech element having its foundations resting on special ideas.

In respect of Literature too, Teschen has always been in perfect unity with the rest of the Czech massif and its share therein significant. Czech literature indeed would be an incomplete thing

were it deprived of the contributions made by Teschen. Of this literary and intellectual unity between Teschen and Bohemia today the poet Bezruč may be regarded as the outstanding symbol. His art with its colouring of Hussitism, which for the modern Czech to a certain extent substitutes the Reformation, is one more testimony, for the Czech conscience of today, to the spiritual identity of Teschen with Bohemia and such an organic complement to Czech literature that, without it, that literature would no longer be a complete whole.

On the other hand Polish literature cannot boast a single writer in the true sense of the word from this territory, a proof, that this soil never had any real connection with Polish culture

Teschen, then, in its entirety, formed both at the time of the Reformation and at the present day an essentially component part of the Czech nation in the sphere of thought and ideas; its territory in its entirety formed an essentially component part of the Bohemian lands as the sphere of the national Bohemian idea, and the consciousness of this cohesion dominated its cultural and political consciousness unbrokenly in all this territory from the days of the Reformation down to the present. It was formulated with precision as to constitutional relations with the Czech State and only of late, and that in an artificial manner, was this consciousness repressed by methods of violence. Teschen contributed and substantially too, and is still contributing to the sum of Bohemian idea and thought, which without this co-operation would be incomplete.

This territory in its integrity is absolutely necessary for enabling the Czechoslovak State to fulfil its due functions. Through Teschen runs the only line of communication between Slovakia and the other states to the north; in Teschen lie the coalfields which are indispensable for us. Poland, as our delegates to the Peace Conference pointed out, can manage well without them.

Ethnographically too, Teschen belongs in its entirety to the Czechoslovak nation. Detailed proofs of this fact were likewise laid before the Peace Conference at Paris.

Every claim which it is possible to deduce from the right of self-determination applies, then, with full force to this territory of Teschen in its entirety—for we see that it forms, without a shadow of doubt, a spiritual and material unit of the Czechoslovak State, apart from which it could possess no personality in international law.

Since, then, Teschen as an entity is an indivisible part of the Czechoslovak State as a creation of the Czech genius, it is impossible to surrender any portion of it. The right of self-determination, which in the final instance is the sum of the historic rights of a nation, cannot suffer a mechanical severance of vital organic interdependent parts to take place.

*The Evangelical Church of Bohemian
Brethren.*

REV15

We entrusted the execution of this task to our member L. Kopal-Stehovsky, who for this purpose availed himself chiefly of an essay which appeared in 1919 in the review „Naše Doba“ (Our Times) published by Jan Laichter, Prague. For the translation we are indebted to Dr. William Beardmore, Prague.

ÚK PrF MU Brno



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