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Jerome of Prague as the second in the Hussite ideology

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Abstract:

Jerome of Prague, who died burnt on a stake in Constance in 1416 even before his actual death became a symbol of martyrdom for the followers of the Czech reform movement. However, he was always seen in the shadow of John Hus, who preceded him not only chronologically in martyrdom, but also with his own significance. The aim of the article is to show how Jerome of Prague was shown by the Hussites, both in their inner discussions and in the polemics with opponents. The role of the second one, as preserved in the primary sources, comes with particular characteristics of the person and his case.

Key words:

Jerome of Prague; Hussites; John Rokycana; Nicholas of Pelhřimov; Jan Hus

There is something in the human nature that promotes being the first. If we look at sports rivalry it seems quite natural, but the phenomenon is not limited to this area. First inventions, first discoveries, and many other "being first" confirm the importance of the first person. These also include spectacular things, some condemned by the society or even self-destructive. The first person is usually remembered, all that follow blur and

become obscured in the chain of events. The reasons for following may be various, it is not uncommon to take improving or confirming of the first deed as the motive by the followers. In long term this is usually a failed attempt. Sometimes though, it is the course of history which sets someone as the second, and the person is unintentionally seen as such.

Jerome of Prague is an example of the tragic role of being the second. There was some solid ground for that role. He was neither the main thinker nor the preacher who influenced the minds of both the people and the elites. Being a well educated and respected person, his position was not of that importance as the Hus's. The death in Constance, however treated as a martyrdom by his supporters in Bohemia, also lacked that crystal transparency characterizing earlier the Hus's process. Comparing them both, one could not blink at his evasive attitude in the first part of the trial. On the other hand one could argue that it took greater courage to face the fate, already knowing what happened to Hus. Among the opponents, the new reform movement in Bohemia was described as "Wycliffite" or "Hussite" heresy¹. And accordingly its followers were quite early called Wycliffites or Hussites, but not Jeromians². Nevertheless, Jerome of Prague was the second with all the consequences for his posthumous presence in the Hussite ideology.

There are detailed studies concerning Jerome of Prague, mainly concentrating on his philosophical works. It is difficult, if possible, to add anything about his life to the biographical work of František Šmahel³.

1 Pavel Soukup, "Kalich jako terč. Znamení hereze v první fázi protihusitské polemiky", In *Kalich jako symbol v prvním století utrakvismu*, ed. Pavel Soukup i Ota Halama (Praha: Centrum mediévistických studií, 2016), 125–30. The author shows the development of the terms and their coexistence at the beginning of the polemical struggle. He mentions also term „Jacobites”, given after Jacob of Mies, what clearly proves his importance, even in comparison with Jerome who died in Constance.

2 The unique case, when it is Jerome who was seen as a founder of the heresy in Bohemia, may be seen in one of the works of Johannes Nider, who omitted Hus completely (however including him in his earlier works), see: Martin PJECHA, "The Changing Perception of the Hussites bz Johannes Nider", In *Kacíři, barbaři, nepřátelé. Odlišnost a stereotypy v pozdním středověku*, red. Vojtěch Bažant i Věra Vejrýchová (Praha: Centrum mediévistických studií, 2016), 214.

3 František ŠMAHEL, *Život a dílo Jeronýma Pražského* (Praha: Argo, 2010); One of the attempts to say once more something about Jerome of Prague and set him in the context of building the hussite movement was made by: Thomas A. FUDGE, *Jerome of*

It is also difficult to evaluate Jerome's importance for the Hussite movement. The specifics of his work narrow the circle of its recipients to the academic circle. This way he is almost invisible as a thinker in later discussions.

There is some trace of Jerome, however, in the sources of the Hussite origin. He is remembered and mentioned as an example victim wrongfully accused and sentenced to death. He becomes, as the second martyr, a part of the ideology, one of the symbols of the movement. The aim of the article is to show some examples of the remarks on Jerome of Prague, which may be found in the Hussite texts after his death. The analysis of the texts would allow to describe the role that Jerome played for the reformers in building and supporting their own convictions.

The term "ideology" has many definitions. It may be understood as a set of ideas shared by a group and showing its interests – and this is how the term is used in this article. The keystones of the Hussite ideas (sometimes significantly different) are undoubtedly – among others – deaths of Hus and Jerome. It is not so important, if the philosophical ideas presented by Jerome were known to the particular Hussites. His death, seen as a defiance against the oppressive ecclesiastical hierarchy, presents the Hussite attitude. And it was shown as such.

One may consider, whether it is not proper to use a term "propaganda" in this case. I am not convinced of that. Taking its wide definition into account one may think of propaganda as mere persuasion⁴. However, usually propaganda is closely connected with pejorative reception, often uses falsehood, and is generally aimed outside of the group. In the case of Hussitism and the death of Jerome those features do not exist. But even if we drop the pejorative association (seen and felt especially in Central Europe), propaganda is seen as a form of communication, which purpose is "to convey an ideology to an audience with a relative objective"⁵. The example of Jerome was used in such a way, but surpassed it. As it shall be shown, it was important both for building of the movement's identity

Prague and the Foundations of the Hussite Movement (New York: OUP USA, 2016).

⁴ Sheryl Tuttle ROSS, "Understanding Propaganda: The Epistemic Merit Model and Its Application to Art", *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 36, nr 1 (2002): 17, doi:10.2307/3333623.

⁵ Garth S. JOWETT i Victoria O'DONNELL, *Propaganda & Persuasion* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), 4.

and argumentation in the discussions with opponents. As such, he and his death represent the ideology as a symbol rather, than are used in propaganda.

Looking at the work of Petr of Mladoňovice gives a reader quite an important insight at the beginning. In his relation about John Hus in Constance, the writer gives just two remarks about Jerome. The first one is an opinion that Jan Náz, king Wenceslaus' official, gives about his ruler's attitude towards Hus and Jerome⁶. He says, that the king once said directly to Hus: "You always cause me troubles with your comrade - Jerome"⁷. Wenceslaus said the words while both Hus and Jerome were in the king's presence. The second remark is a relation of the conversation between king Sigismund and two Bohemian nobles, one of them being John of Chlum. The king says that there must be some end to the Hus' case as well as to his followers, among them the one that is already imprisoned. The king cannot remember Jerome's name. Only after one of the interlocutors asks whether it is Jerome he had on his mind, the king agrees and adds: "the one is a disciple, the other one is a teacher"⁸. The king's words, as quoted by Petr, show us the position of Jerome as seen by the two sides of the conflict. These are all the comments on Jerome in the description of Hus' case. Naturally, one must remember, that Petr wrote another work on the death of Jerome, this time entirely focusing on him⁹.

The way of remembering Jerome presented by this example shows one form of being "the second" - it is: treated as a pupil or minor participant in the case. That is obviously true, but implements other consequences, too. Jerome as a person is strictly connected with the death of John Hus, and is mentioned in the second place each time. A visible example may be the famous *List stížný*, a letter dated 2nd September 1415 by the Czech and Moravian nobles, who protest after the death of Hus and link

6 In the spring of 1415 Jan Náz was active as the Council reported about the religious stir in Bohemia, see: F. ŠMAHEL, *Husitská revoluce*, v. 1-4 (Praha, 1993), 276.

7 Petr MLADOŇOVIČ, "Zpráva o Mistru Janu Husovi v Kostnici", In *Ze zpráv a kronik doby husitské*, ed. Ivan Hlaváček, trans. František Heřmanský (Praha: Svoboda, 1981), 101.

8 *Ibid.*, 151.

9 Petr MLADOŇOVIČ, "Vypravování o Mistru Jeronýmovi Pražském, upáleném v Kostnici pro jméno Kristovo", In *Ze zpráv a kronik doby husitské*, ed. Ivan Hlaváček, trans. Eva Kamínková i Rudolf Urbánek (Praha: Svoboda, 1981), 205-19.

it with the same fate of Jerome¹⁰. Similar connection may be seen in the declaration issued by the University of Prague from 11th of September 1415, which also links the two deaths together¹¹. Even before his actual death, Jerome was already bonded with Hus. In each mentioned source, the description of Jerome is significantly shorter and formulated as an additional case.

Jerome's death might be treated as an echo of Hus's martyrdom, but it was still seen as such and that elevated him with Hus into the circle of new saints. So called "satirical letter of king Sigismund", a short and sharp pamphlet from 1419, evokes that conviction in Prague, saying that "John Hus and Jerome and some other laymen, who were killed – as you say – for the Christ's law, you include among saints and you celebrate their commemoration forgetting about the other feasts"¹². The remark may be supported by another important source – the sermons of John Želivský from 1419, which show the way Hus and Jerome were sanctified in the Czech reform movement. In a sermon given in the Eastern octave, Želivský makes a simple comparison – the one who conquers the world is truly that person who fights for the truth. When Christ said – I am with you till the end of times, it was also dedicated to Hus and Jerome¹³. In another sermon, given on the Ascension, he draws an interesting picture. The preacher says that there were many such occasions when people were being seduced with wine. But some passed the test unharmed, because they refrained from drinking the wine. Among them were John Hus, Jerome, Michael in Poland, Nicholas from Meissen. Želivský presents emperor

10 There were numerous editions of the letter as it is one of the fundamental sources for the foundation of the Czech reform movement, among chosen editions see f.e. Petr ČORNEJ et al., ed., *Stížný list české a moravské šlechty proti upálení Mistra Jana Husa 1415-2015* (Okrouhlice: Spolek Za záchranu rodného domu malíře Jana Zrzavého, 2015), 9; Ivan HLAVÁČEK, ed., „Stížný list české a moravské šlechty”, In *Ze zpráv a kronik doby husitské*, trans. František Heřmanský (Praha: Svoboda, 1981), 197; Amedeo MOLNÁR, ed., „Stížný list českých a moravských pánů do Kostnice”, In *Husitské manifesty* (Praha: Orbis, 1980), 50.

11 Amedeo MOLNÁR, ed., „Osvědčení pražské univerzity o Husovi a Jeronýmovi”, In *Husitské manifesty* (Praha: Orbis, 1980), 56.

12 A. MOLNÁR, ed., „Satirický list «krále Zikmunda»”, In *Husitské manifesty* (Praha: Orbis, 1980), 72 The „letter” was composed in 1419.

13 J. ŽELIVSKÝ, *Dochovaná kázání z roku 1419*, ed. Amedeo Molnár, v. 1 (Praha: Nakladatelství Československé Akademie Věd, 1953), 56.

Constantine as the one who was seducing clergymen with wine¹⁴. Comparing the two situations he sets Hus, Jerome and others among the pure Christians, who did not follow the corrupted part of the Church.

There is another excerpt from Želivský's sermons, which resembles the formula: *verba docent et exempla trahunt*. The preacher says that John Baptist's austerity was more convincing for people than Christ's miracles. Because the one who needs confirmation with miracles is not a true believer. However, quite surprisingly Želivský leads his thoughts to Hus and Jerome, saying that after their deaths there were many visible signs. And their heroic attitude was the biggest sign one could get¹⁵. Again, Jerome is strictly connected with Hus and both are mentioned because of the fate they met in Constance.

The early years of the revolution are covered by an invaluable source which is the *Chronicle* of Laurentius of Březova. The author gives a detailed description of Jerome's trial and death, each time comparing it to Hus and also intermingling the events from Jerome's life with some information about Hus, for example that there were services in churches for Hus's soul¹⁶. Jerome is clearly the second, however Laurentius gives the reader a deeper picture of him as a person facing the overwhelming adversities leading to his heroic death. Laurentius also gives an account of the diplomatic struggle between Bohemians and king Sigismund. He mentions the envoy sent to the king to Brno in 1419, which stated that the sentence issued in Constance against Hus and Jerome should be condemned¹⁷. He also connotes the exchange of opinions between the diet in Čáslav and king Sigismund in 1421. Jerome's case got a special place in the articles composed in Čáslav. He is again the second after Hus, but his case is described separately and with a different accusation against Sigismund¹⁸. The king's reply mentions Hus and Jerome only when quoting the accusations. However, his own words cleverly omit mentioning Jerome. Sigismund just answers that he tried to justify the passed brother

14 Ibid., 1:126–27.

15 Ibid., 1:128–29.

16 Vavřinec z BŘEZOVÉ, "Kronika husitská", In *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, ed. J. Goll, v. 5 (Praha, 1893), 340–44.

17 Ibid., 353.

18 Ibid., 489.

in Constance and experienced lots of resistance for that reason. Sigismund focuses only on John Hus, does not mention Jerome at all, but while avoiding using the name of John Hus in this sentence – he writes just: “the brother of happy memory” and creates the impression of talking about both burnt thinkers¹⁹. Laurentius also considers Jerome second calling him “the Hus’s comrade”²⁰.

Jerome is also presented as the second, but nonetheless important person in fighting for purity of the Church in the Hussite manifestos. In the manifesto issued by the Taborite hejtmans in 1431 the authors discredit the opinion that „Hus and Jerome were proven wrong by the church authorities in Constance”²¹. They also announce that God will send revenge to their oppressors. The same motive may be found in other manifestos²².

The important Hussite thinkers were quite cautious in evoking the two masters burnt in Constance. For example Jacob of Mies, when writing his *Explanation on the Book of Revelation*, gave just one hint about Hus and Jerome even not mentioning their names. He said, that one should avoid false testimonies about good people as it happened against the ones that were burnt in Constance²³. It is important, that he uses plural form, even not introducing names to his treatise. One may see that among Hussite leaders it is Nicholas of Pelhřimov, who mentions Jerome in a more personal or even warm form. In his *Chronicle* he writes that Jerome was an eloquent and wise person, unjustly sentenced for being

19 Ibid., 492.

20 Vavřinec z BŘEZOVÉ, “Výtah z kroniky Vavřince z Březové”, In *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, ed. J. Goll, v. 5 (Praha, 1893), 537.

21 A. MOLNÁR, rd., “Manifest tábořských hejtmánů”, In *Husitské manifesty* (Praha: Orbis, 1980), 158.

22 A. MOLNÁR, ed., “List z celé země české”, In *Husitské manifesty* (Praha: Orbis, 1980), 180.

23 Jakoubek ze STŘÍBRA, *Výklad na zjevení*, ed. F. Šimek, v. 1 (Praha: Komise pro vydávání pramenů českého hnutí náboženského ve stol. 14. a 15., zřízená při České akademii věd a umění, 1932), 436; As for his sermons form years 1415-1416, F. M. Bartoš explains the lack of mentions about Jerome in the certain places (where Hus is mentioned as sentenced and burnt in Constance), with earlier dates of the sermons, proceeding the second death. František M. BARTOŠ, “Betlemská kázání Jakoubka ze Stříbra z let 1415-1416”, *Křesťanská revue. Theologická příloha* 20 (1953): 55, 118.

faithful to God. He also adds that after his death there were many others who shared the fate in Bohemia and Moravia²⁴. Jerome is naturally mentioned in the second place after Hus, but his description is more vivid than in other cases. In Nicholas' words he gets an individual feature. The Taborite remembers about Jerome also during the inner disputes with other reformers. Confronting John Rokycana he gives a harsh description of archbishop Conrad of Vechta. Among several objections he also mentions that Conrad of Vechta played his part in the deaths of Hus and Jerome²⁵.

Nicholas of Pelhřimov played a significant role in the Czech mission to Basel²⁶. During the dispute with the council it was he, who turned the attention to the case of Hus and Jerome. Till his speech in the end of January 1433, both sides avoided the topic. The mutual diplomatic interest, as seen also during the Cheb assembly a year earlier, implied a complete silence over the deaths of Hus and Jerome. It was a case in which neither side could seek a compromise. First of the speakers thus, John Rokycana, did not touch the case, sticking to his own topic, i.e. the communion under both kinds. Nicholas – on the other hand – could not stay silent, and speaking about different kinds of sins he tried to involve it into his speech. We may read in his *Oratio...* about the unfair trial of Hus and the pain that it caused also for Bohemia and Moravia, unjustly accused of heresy. Nicholas continued the thought turning to Jerome and calling his case “the renewing of the earlier pain”. He drew a short portrait of Jerome as a person unwilling to accept the Hus's death and Wycliff's condemnation²⁷. Once again Jerome is the second one, the renewing of the pain, however his sacrifice is portrayed as an individual one.

With touching the sore point, Nicholas introduced the topic to the debate. His opponent, Aegidius Carlerii responded to the defense of Hus,

24 Nicholas de PELHŘIMOV, “Chronicon Taboritarum”, In *Geschichtschreiber der hussitischen Bewegung in Böhmen*, ed. Konstantin Höfler, v. 2 (Wien: Die kaiserlich-königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1865), 477.

25 Mikulaš z PELHŘIMOVA, *Vyznání a obrana Táborů*, ed. Amedeo Molnár i František M. Dobiáš (Praha: Nakladatelství Československé Akademie Věd, 1972), 143–44.

26 A. KRCHŇÁK, *Čechové na basilejském sněmu* (Svitavy, 1997), passim; Stanisław Bylina, *Podróż husytów do Bazylei* (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 2013), 74–75.

27 F. M. BARTOŠ, ed., *Orationes, quibus Nicolaus de Pelhřimov, taboritarum episcopus, et Ulricus de Znojmo, orphanorum sacerdos, articulos de peccatis publicis puniendis et libertate verbi dei in concilio basiliensi anno 1433 ineunte defenderunt* (Tábor, 1935), 24–25.

but also touched the case of Jerome. In his opinion, Jerome was an arrogant and self-important person and if he had not earlier left Paris, he would have faced the accusations there²⁸. The discussion appeared in several speeches, however it was focused mainly on Hus. Even Rokycana was finally driven into that, as he could not be separated by the case from the rest of the Czech delegation. The Taborite author of the relation about the Czech mission at the Council of Basel, noted each such occurrence. Therefore it is the more important what he wrote about Rokycana's remarks on the Constance events. The Utraquist leader spoke again about the case on the 4th of March, trying to reach a formula that would be acceptable for the parties seeking mutual agreement. He said that Hus was sentenced rather due to the false witnesses than it was a guilt of the Council in Constance. Or at least that is how the author of the relation perceived Rokycana's words. He added that Rokycana praised Jacob of Mies, spoke a lot about Wycliff, but he remained silent about Jerome²⁹. That single remark is very significant. It shows the inevitable fate of being the second: importance that is fading in time or may be omitted when it is needed because of the circumstances.

We may see that fading on other examples. The members of the Unity of Brethren, who in their writings appealed to the heritage of the Czech religious reform, turned to Hus, but not to Jerome. When they wrote that the Czechs understood the maliciousness of linking the secular and spiritual power, they evoked the name of John Hus. They remind that he was burnt, but they do not evoke Jerome, as we should expect. They just add: "as happened later to others, who followed his example"³⁰. In several texts they mention Hus's martyrdom, even comparing him to a manifesting angel or to his posthumous influence on the Church in Bohemia, but they do not mention Jerome³¹.

The fading of importance may also be seen in the Czech translation of the Laurentius' of Březova *Chronicle* I earlier quoted. The translation

28 I. HLAVÁČEK, ed., "Deník tábořského kněze o jednání Čechů na koncilu basilejském z roku 1433", In *Ze zpráv a kronik doby husitské*, trans. F. Heřmanský (Praha, 1981), 358. According to the source, the opinion was expressed in the middle of the Hussite stay in Basel, on 17th of February 1433.

29 Ibid., 369. Rokycana responded on 4th of March.

30 Jaroslav BIDLO, ed., "Kterak se mají lidé míti k církvi římské", In *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, v. I (Brno: Historická Komise při Matici Moravské, 1915), 363.

31 Jaroslav BIDLO, ed., "Psání kněze Martina vězně mistru Janovi Rokycanovi",

is definitely later than the original Latin text. There are at least two such interesting examples. When Laurentius describes the case of Jan Krása, sentenced in March 1420 in Vratislavia, he says, that among the articles he rejected was supporting of the verdict in Constance against Hus and Jerome. In the Czech translation however, we may find only Hus's name³². Another example is connected with the description of the fugitives from Prague, who were against the chalice and who were earlier glad hearing that Hus and Jerome were burnt at the stake. In the Czech translation, there is no mention about either of them³³. In this case there is a possibility, that omitting both names was merely a translator's mistake. It is not a rule without exceptions though, and there are sources which show that Jerome was still remembered. In an unfinished treatise *Contra adversarios compactata non servantes*, preserved in so called *Manuálík Václava Korandy* one may find a short description of the initial phases of the Hussite movement. Jan Hus and Jerome are mentioned together, their fate is even presented in such a way that a reader may think their executions took place at the same time³⁴.

To conclude one must assume, that Jerome's role was typical for the "second one". If it is an injurious description for him as a person, at the same time it is the truth in terms of the Hussite ideology. He is mentioned almost always in connection with John Hus, always in the second place. With time passing by, even the significance of his death seems to fade. In later decades of the 15th century more and more often expression "Hus and Jerome" was replaced with "Hus and the others".

In *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, v. 1 (Brno: Historická Komise při Matici Moravské, 1915), 562; Jaroslav BIDLO, ed., "Psání panu podkomořímu Království Českého", In *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, v. 1 (Brno: Historická Komise při Matici Moravské, 1915), 549.

32 Vavřinec z BŘEZOVÉ, "Kronika husitská", 358.

33 Ibid., 360-61.

34 Václav KORANDA, "Contra adversarios compactata non servantes", In *Manuálík M. Václava Korandy*, ed. Josef Truhlář (Praha: Královská Česká Společnost Nauk, 1888), 155; About the treatise, see: Amedeo MOLNÁR, ed., *Acta Reformationem Bohemica Illustrantia. Příspěvky k dějinám utrakvismu* (Kalich-Praha: Komenského Evangelická Fakulta Bohoslovecká, 1978), 202.

Jerome of Prague as the second in the Hussite ideology

PAWEL F. NOWAKOWSKI

Jerome of Prague, who died burnt on a stake in Constance in 1416, even before his actual death became a symbol of martyrdom for the followers of the Czech reform movement. He was a well known thinker, a philosopher who was recognized as an academic. However, he was always seen in the shadow of John Hus, who preceded him not only chronologically in martyrdom, but also with his own significance. Thus it was the preacher rather than the academic who would be remembered by wider circles of the society and the followers of the reform in Bohemia would eventually be called the Hussites not Jeromians.

The aim of the article is to show how Jerome of Prague was presented by the Hussites, both in their inner discussions and in the polemics with opponents. The role of the second one, as preserved in the primary sources, comes with a particular characteristics of the person and his case. One example is that of Petr of Mladoňovice who was the author of the work dedicated to Jerome of Prague. However, in another work, describing John Hus's death, he mentioned Jerome just twice and shortly. Hus and Jerome, always in that order, are enumerated in various sources of the Hussite origin during the years of revolution, such as manifestos, the *Chronicle* of Laurentius of Březova or John Želivský's sermons. As the time passed, the mentions became vague and less frequent. During the disputes in Basel with the council, the both sides focused rather on Hus than on Jerome. In one of his speeches even John Rokycana omitted Jerome while recalled the death of Hus in Constance. The tendency is also visible with the new religious communities that appeared during the decades of the Hussite period. The Unity of Brethren acknowledged the heritage of the first martyrs of the reform movement in Bohemia but it was again Hus not Jerome, who they referred to.

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