

The “Golden City” under Embargo: Prague’s International Trade during the Hussite Wars, 1420–1436

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ABSTRACT. After the outbreak of the First Hussite Wars (spring 1420), the Hussite capital Prague faced—at least in theory—a total embargo on all trade and commerce. However, trade evidently continued in spite of this embargo. The present article systematically assesses our knowledge on this trade and highlights articles, geographical structures and agents of long-distance trade to and from the Czech metropolis during the war, thus furthering our knowledge about the economic history of early fifteenth-century Central Europe in general. Furthermore, the author uses the example of the anti-Hussite embargo to address important and hitherto largely-neglected methodological questions concerning the analysis of medieval trade prohibitions in general.

Introduction

ALL roads may eventually lead to Rome, as the saying goes, but in the early fifteenth century all Bohemian roads first and foremost led to Prague.¹ The kingdom’s political and religious center since the Early Middle Ages, the Czech capital had enjoyed the generous support of generations of monarchs, culminating in the city’s ambitious enlargement under the Bohemian king and Emperor Charles IV (d. 1378).² Charles aimed at transforming his hereditary capital into the political and spiritual center of the empire; a new Rome and a new Jerusalem. Yet the emperor also remembered the economic interests of the men and women populating his lofty “Golden City.” Assisted by the Old Town merchant-elite, he set out to strengthen Prague’s position in domestic trade by reinforcing its privileged place in the Bohemian road network.³ At the same time, he tried—in accordance

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¹After 1348, the Prague conurbation encompassed three administratively independent municipalities: Old, New, and Lesser Towns. During the Hussite period, attempts were made to unify the towns politically; however, these reforms were short-lived. For reasons of practicality, this article will refer to the entire conurbation as “Prague.” More detailed distinctions between the individual towns will only be made where necessary.

²Cf. only Václav Ledvinka and Jiří Pešek, *Prag* (Prague: Lidové Noviny, 2000), 143–56; Paul Crossley and Zoë Opačić, “Prague as a New Capital,” in *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia 1347–1437*, ed. Barbara Drake Boehm and Jiří Fajt (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2005), 59–73.

³František Graus, *Český obchod se suknem ve 14. a počátkem 15. století: K otázce významu středověkého obchodu* (Prague: Melantrich, 1950), 70–74; Peter Moraw, “Monarchie und Bürgertum,” in *Kaiser Karl IV.: Staatsmann und Mäzen*, ed. Ferdinand Seibt, 2nd ed. (Munich: Prestel, 1978), 43–63, 438–39; Peter Moraw, “Räte und Kanzlei,” in Seibt, *Kaiser Karl IV.*, 285–92, 460.

with his own political goals—to redirect international transit routes via Prague.⁴ Even if Charles was not able to actually change the patterns of European long-distance trade, Prague's international trade flourished until the second half of the fourteenth century, enabling the affluent Old Town merchants to further consolidate their position and to acquire extensive privileges from Charles's son and heir, the Bohemian king and emperor-elect, Wenceslas IV (d. 1419).⁵ In 1393, the monarch stipulated, for instance, that all merchandise imported from Bavaria, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Lusatia, and Meissen had to be shipped via Prague's Old Town.⁶ The same charter banned foreign merchants from selling goods anywhere en route. Once in Prague, they could sell only to local merchants. This meant that the merchants of Prague wielded—at least in theory—a monopoly on all trade in import goods in the kingdom, making their city the undisputed capital of Bohemia's domestic and international trade.

This situation changed abruptly, when in the summer of 1419 longstanding tensions within Bohemian society erupted into what came to be known as the Hussite Revolution.⁷ Building on Wycliffite teachings, a group of university-based reformers around Jan Hus (d. 1415) had since the turn of the century sought to amend the church, and in the process developed ideas on ecclesiastical property, the role of lay authorities, and the nature and proper reception of the Eucharist, which were denounced as heretical by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Owing to a complex mixture of social, political, religious, and ethnic factors, the movement gained such momentum that in the summer of 1419 a royal attempt to reestablish Catholic orthodoxy in the capital caused turmoil, resulting in the so-called First Prague Defenestration (July 30, 1419). When King Wenceslas died shortly after, the Bohemian throne devolved to his half-brother, the Hungarian king and emperor-elect Sigismund (d. 1437), who had distinguished himself at the Council of Constance as an avid opponent of Hussitism. Consequently, the Hussite estates—including Prague—rejected his succession. After several months of diplomatic maneuvering, Pope

⁴Wolfgang von Stromer, "Der kaiserliche Kaufmann: Wirtschaftspolitik unter Karl IV.," in Seibt, ed., *Kaiser Karl IV.*, 63–73, 439–40; Gerhard Theuerkauf, "Brandenburg, Böhmen und die Elbregion: Zur Handelsgeschichte des späten Mittelalters," in *Die Hanse und der deutsche Osten*, ed. Norbert Angermann (Lüneburg: Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1990) 67–78; Ulrich List, "Goldene Straße," *Historisches Lexikon Bayerns*, March 1, 2010 (http://www.historisches-lexikon-bayerns.de/Lexikon/Goldene_Straße). Most recently Miloš Dvořák, "Čisář Karel IV. a pražský zahraniční obchod," *Pražský sborník historický* 34 (2006): 7–91; 35 (2007): 7–61. Dvořák strives to correct older negative assessments of Prague's role in domestic and international trade, represented, for instance, by František Graus, "Prag als Mitte Böhmens 1346–1421," in *Zentralität als Problem der mittelalterlichen Stadtgeschichtsforschung*, ed. Emil Meynen (Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1979), 22–47.

⁵Franz Pick, "Beiträge zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Stadt Prag im Mittelalter, part 2, Das Gästerecht," *Mitteilungen des Vereines für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen* 44 (1906): 443–44.

⁶Jaromír Čelakovský, ed., *Codex iuris municipalis regni Bohemiae*, vol. 1 (Prague: Dr. Edvard Grégr, 1886) 176–79 (no. 111; Žebrák, January 25, 1393). All imported merchandise had to be inspected in the Týn, the central customhouse next to the Old Town Square. Franz Pick, "Beiträge zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Stadt Prag im Mittelalter, part 1, Das Prager Ungeld im 14. Jahrhundert," *Mitteilungen des Vereines für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen* 44 (1906): 277–321; Graus, *Český obchod se sukнем ve 14. a počátekem 15. století*, 62–66.

⁷Historiography on the Hussite Revolution is abundant. The most recent synthesis in Czech is Petr Čornej, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české, vol. 5, 1402–1437* (Prague: Paseka, 2000); in German, František Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, 3 vols. (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2002). An up-to-date English-language survey on Hussite theology and religious practice is now provided by *A Companion to the Hussites*, ed. Michael Van Dussen and Pavel Soukup (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020).

Martin V (d.1431), along with Sigismund, eventually declared the first of a series of crusades against the allegedly heretical Hussites. The ensuing Hussite Wars (1420–1436) came to be one of the largest armed conflicts of late medieval central European history.⁸ Only after the destruction of the most radical Hussite factions, and the lengthy negotiations with the Council of Basel, did the warring parties reach a compromise in the form of the so-called Basel Compacts of 1436.⁹

The Anti-Hussite Embargo

Like any other war, the Hussite Wars brought about considerable economic disruption. An embargo imposed by the Catholic side on all trade and commerce with the Hussite “heretics” constituted not the least of these disturbances.¹⁰ As a result, Prague not only had to endure—albeit briefly—a siege by the armies of the first anti-Hussite crusade, but also a general interruption of international trade with the neighboring territories. Moreover, considerable parts of the kingdom’s border regions, especially to the west and to the south, remained loyal to the pope and King Sigismund throughout the war. This meant that from summer 1420 on, Prague was—at least in theory—cut off from most of its traditional trading partners.

Due to the Hussite Revolution’s significance for the history of fifteenth-century Bohemia, most of the works dealing with the social or economic history of Prague in the Late Middle Ages allude at least briefly to the anti-Hussite embargo.¹¹ Usually, the focus is on the question of whether the embargo worked and what effects it had. Curiously, authors who discuss the topic generally arrive at a somewhat paradoxical conclusion: they routinely claim that the embargo affected trade, while simultaneously presenting evidence for its continuous circumvention. Zikmund Winter, for instance, argued in his seminal work on the history of Czech trade in the Late Middle Ages that the anti-Hussite embargo resulted in the kingdom’s economic isolation, the relocation of international trade routes to the surrounding countries, and the eventual decline of the Prague staple, only to then present a long list of sources that testified to the city’s continued involvement in international trade.¹² Subsequent authors such as Miloslav Volf, Hans Schenk, Miloslav Polívka, and most recently Miloš Dvořák, more or less followed Winter’s example.¹³ This

⁸For a concise depiction of the history of events in German, Ferdinand Seibt, “Die Zeit der Luxemburger und die hussitische Revolution,” in *Handbuch der Geschichte der Böhmisches Länder, vol. 1, Die Böhmisches Länder von der archaischen Zeit bis zum Ausgang der hussitischen Revolution*, ed. Karl Bosl (Stuttgart: Anton Hirsemann, 1967), 512–36; in English, Frederick G. Heymann, “The Crusades against the Hussites,” in *A History of the Crusades, vol. 3, The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Kenneth M. Setton and Harry W. Hazard (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 586–647.

⁹Most recently, František Šmahel, *Die Basler Kompaktaten mit den Hussiten (1436). Untersuchung und Edition* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2019).

¹⁰Alexandra Kaar, *Wirtschaft, Krieg und Seelenheil: Papst Martin V., Kaiser Sigismund und das Handelsverbot gegen die Hussiten in Böhmen* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau, 2020). An English-language synopsis in Alexandra Kaar, “Embargoing ‘Heretics’ in Fifteenth-Century Central Europe: The Case of Hussite Bohemia,” *Journal of Medieval History* 46, no. 4 (2020): 1–20.

¹¹The council of Pavia-Siena’s fundamental 1423 decree on the embargo is already discussed in Wáclav Wladivoj Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy*, vol. 4 (Prague: František Řivnáč, 1879), 305. See note 19.

¹²Zikmund Winter, *Dějiny řemesel a obchodu v Čechách v 14. a 15. století* (Prague: Česká Akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění, 1906), 892–95.

¹³Miloslav Volf, “Příspěvky k historii obchodních styků s cizinou ve středověku. Obchod solí,” *Časopis společnosti přátel starožitností československých v Praze* 44 (1936): 35–37; Hans Schenk, *Nürnberg und Prag. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Handelsbeziehungen im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1969),

has led to considerable scholarly disagreement about the embargo's effects on the economy of Hussite Bohemia. Winfried Eberhard, for instance, suggested that pecuniary injuries caused by the embargo were one of the driving forces behind the Old Town elites' inclination toward negotiations with the Catholics, which became crucial during the later stages of the Hussite Revolution.¹⁴ Continuing this line of reasoning, Petr Čornej saw the papal restrictions on trade and their economic consequences as critical factors for the momentous intra-Hussite clash at Lipany in May 1434,¹⁵ whereas Jaroslav Čechura once called the embargo a mere "myth ... of Hussite scholarship."¹⁶

Research on the anti-Hussite embargo has thus evidently arrived at a deadlock. To move beyond this impasse, one has to step away from the essentially insoluble question of efficiency and effects. Therefore, this article will not aim at proving anew that the embargo against the Hussites was circumvented and that trade continued in spite of it. Rather, I will try to explore what can be learned about Prague's economic history during the Hussite Wars by looking at its trade relations through the prism of the anti-Hussite embargo. By reassessing the wide spectrum of preserved sources, I hope to extricate the discussion of economic life in the Hussite capital from the—futile—question of the anti-Hussite embargo's efficacy. To this effect, though, this article will first have to address some of the methodological issues, which arise from the analysis of a medieval embargo; issues that have contributed to the said quasi-deadlock in previous research.

Sources and Their Interpretation

Prescriptive Sources

Sources for the history of trade in and around Prague during the embargo are fairly scarce and unevenly distributed. One needs to look at a variety of documents emanating from different source genres and different places well beyond the Czech capital. Usually, the starting point for studying trade relations are royal privileges. Due to the political situation, however, Sigismund did not bestow such privileges on Prague before the summer of 1436. Even though indirect evidence concerning trade with the capital can also be found in some of his earlier charters for other recipients,¹⁷ one is forced to resort to other sources. The anti-Hussite embargo brought about a number of such documents, namely papal bulls and royal mandates imposing the embargo. However, none of the hitherto known prescriptive documents explicitly mentions the city of Prague. This is explained, among other things,

75–80; Miloslav Polívka, "K 'černému obchodu' s kutnohorskou mědí v husitské době," *Časopis Matice Moravské* 113 (1994): 25–34; Miloslav Polívka, "Wirtschaftliche Beziehungen Nürnbergs mit den 'böhmischen Ketzern' in den Jahren 1419 bis 1434: Haben die Nürnberger mit den Hussiten Handel betrieben?," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 86 (1999): 1–19; Dvořák, "Císař Karel IV.," 34 (2006): 32–33, 36, 48–49, and 35 (2007): 15, 24–26, 40–42. A notable exception is Josef Janáček's nuanced treatment of the subject, Josef Janáček, "Der böhmische Aussenhandel in der Hälfte [sic] des 15. Jahrhunderts," *Historica* 4 (1962): 43–47.

¹⁴Winfried Eberhard, "Der Weg zur Koexistenz. Kaiser Sigmund und das Ende der hussitischen Revolution," *Bohemia* 33 (1992): 5–6, based on Josef Macek, *Jean Hus et les traditions hussites (XVe–XIXe siècles)* (Paris: Plon, 1973), 185.

¹⁵Petr Čornej, "Epidemie a kalamity v letech 1419–1471 očima českých kronikářů," *Documenta Pragensia* 7 (1987): 201–2.

¹⁶Jaroslav Čechura, "Mor, krize a husitská revoluce," *Český časopis historický* 92 (1994): 300–1.

¹⁷See note 67.

by the nature of these documents as expressions of the general embargo on trade with heretics, whatever their denomination or residence.¹⁸ This fact has important implications for the interpretation of these types of sources, implications which scholars so far often failed to acknowledge. A prime example in this respect is the interpretation of a key document on the anti-Hussite embargo—a decree issued by the ephemeral council of Pavia-Siena in November 1423, in which the council fathers forbade every faithful Christian to deliver food, spices, cloth, salt, lead, gunpowder, weapons, military equipment, or any other items to the Hussite heretics.¹⁹ As I have shown recently, the wording of the decree is a more or less verbatim rendition of twelfth-century canon law.²⁰ It is therefore highly problematic to try to reconstruct actual trade relations based on the Sienese decree,²¹ even if the formulae were evidently somewhat adapted to fit early fifteenth-century realities.²² Moreover, it is important to remember that prescriptive sources try to enforce or discourage certain behaviors, and they are not a testimony to the actual situation on the ground—a fact that unfortunately occasionally tends to get overlooked.²³ Due to these methodological issues, the charters and mandates imposing the anti-Hussite embargo are of only limited significance for the reconstruction of Prague’s international trade during the Hussite Wars.²⁴

Documentary Sources

As opposed to prescriptive sources, chronicles, correspondences, and administrative records may provide insights into actual commercial transactions (or their failure). The most important historiographical works for the history of Hussite Prague—the chronicle of the learned writer and Prague town clerk, Lawrence of Březová (d. ca. 1437),²⁵ the anonymous

¹⁸On this “papal embargo” recently, Stefan K. Stantchev, *Spiritual Rationality: Papal Embargo as Cultural Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁹Werner Brandmüller, ed., *Das Konzil von Pavia-Siena (1423–1424)*, vol. 2, *Quellen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1974), 20–2 (no. 3; Pavia, November 8, 1423): “omnesque et singulos eisdem [hereticis] ... quecumque victualia, species aromatics et pannos, sal, plumbum, pulveres bombardarum vel arma sive instrumenta bellica, seu res alias quascumque adducentes ... penis et damnacionibus contra hereticos promulgatis fore obnoxios.” English translation Thomas A. Fudge, *The Crusade against Heretics in Bohemia (1418–1437)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 171–73 (no. 98).

²⁰Kaar, *Wirtschaft, Krieg und Seelenheil*, 102–6.

²¹Cf., for instance, Dvořák, “Císař Karel IV.,” 35 (2007): 24, who refers to the 1423 decree to back up his reconstruction of merchandise shipped between Nuremberg (!) and Prague in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

²²This seems to be the case with the reference to gunpowder. Cf. Kaar, *Wirtschaft, Krieg und Seelenheil*, 105.

²³A graphic illustration is, for instance, the description of the embargo’s effects on the trade between the Bavarian town of Passau and Bohemia in Paul Praxl, *Der Goldene Steig* (Grafenau: Morsak, 1983), 13. The author claims that international trade “almost came to a halt” during the Hussite Wars because the forest tracks traditionally used to transport salt from Bavaria to western Bohemia were “barred and barricaded.” To my knowledge, there is no contemporary account attesting to an actual blockade of the Bavarian border passes. Most probably the author based his description on a 1434 privilege for Passau (Passau City Archives, I. Urkunden, no. 496 [Regensburg, September 14, 1434]). In this document, Emperor Sigismund orders the city’s merchants to supervise traffic on the so-called “Golden Track” to prevent merchandise from being delivered to the Hussites. A royal order is thus transformed into a description of the embargo’s effects, an approach one also encounters in many other works on the anti-Hussite embargo.

²⁴For an instructive exception, see note 55.

²⁵Jaroslav Goll, ed., “Vavřince z Březové Kronika Husitská,” in *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. 5 (FRB 5 hereafter) (Prague: Edv. Valečka, 1893), 327–541. Cf. now the English translation by Thomas A. Fudge, *Origins of the Hussite Uprising: The Chronicle of Lawrence of Březová (1414–1421)* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).

compilation known today as the *Old Czech Annals*,²⁶ and the records kept by the Catholic nobleman and member of the Karlštejn garrison, Bartošek of Drahonice (d. ca. 1443)²⁷—indeed contain a few descriptions of the blockade of (Hussite or Catholic) strongholds. However, these events scarcely contribute to the analysis of trade, as they were a standard element of late medieval siege warfare. Much more rewarding in this respect are diplomatic correspondences, which survive in greater numbers in some of the historiographical works on the Council of Basel, and especially municipal correspondences such as the letters of the Imperial City of Nuremberg. During the fourteenth century, Nuremberg had attained a key role in central European trade, including commerce with the Czech capital.²⁸ The city's *Briefbücher* (i.e., contemporary registers of letters sent on behalf of the city's council) have survived to date, representing one of the prime sources for early–fifteenth-century central European history.²⁹ Among many other things, these letters bear witness to associates and employees of the great Nuremberg merchant houses shipping merchandise to and from Bohemia during the Hussite Wars, and occasionally even to the enemy capital.³⁰ Furthermore, important information can be gathered from records originating from the Old Town council's jurisdiction over commercial matters.³¹ The most valuable data, finally, comes from two contemporary account books: an isolated bill of cost documenting part of the Old Town council's expenditures in 1429–1430³² and the invaluable account books of Karlštejn Castle, which cover almost the entirety of the Hussite Wars.³³ Karlštejn—some thirty kilometers west of Prague—was an important royal stronghold throughout the war. This did not prevent the castle's garrison, however, from entertaining close social and economic relations with the nearby capital, which were enabled by the truces concluded on a regular basis between the garrison and its Hussite opponents. Accordingly, the castle's accounts are a first-rate source for the economic history of Hussite Prague.

²⁶The *Annals* survive in different versions with a complicated transmission history. Cf. the overview by Petr Čornej, "Původní vrstva starých letopisů českých," in *Staré letopisy české: texty nejstarší vrstvy*, ed. Alena M. Černá et al. (Prague: Filosofia, 2003), VII–XLIII, and at note 109.

²⁷Jaroslav Goll, ed., "Kronika Bartoška z Drahonice," in *FRB* 5, 589–628.

²⁸Wolfgang von Stromer, *Oberdeutsche Hochfinanz 1350–1450*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1970). Specifically on trade with Prague see Schenk, *Nürnberg und Prag*; Dvořák, "Císař Karel IV.," e.g. 35 (2007): 24–26.

²⁹Nuremberg, State Archives, Reichsstadt Nürnberg, Briefbücher des Inneren Rates (StAN BB), nos. 5–12.

³⁰See the seminal analysis by Polívka, "Wirtschaftliche Beziehungen Nürnbergs mit den 'böhmischen Ketzern' in den Jahren 1419 bis 1434." This article is not, however, free from over-interpretation. See note 86 for an example concerning Prague.

³¹Schenk, *Nürnberg und Prag*, 6–9. The especially valuable Prague City Archives' manuscript no. 2099 ("Memorial Book") was unfortunately lost in 1945 and can now be used only through the mediation of the prewar historiography.

³²Hana Pátková, ed., *Berní knihy Starého Města pražského 1427–1434* (*Berní knihy* with no author hereafter) (Prague: Scriptorium, 1996), 147–72. Unfortunately, the analogous manuscript Prague City Archives, no. 989 from Prague's New Town does not contain any data for the years 1419 to 1434.

³³Josef Pelikán, ed., *Účty hradu Karlštejna z let 1423–1434* (*Účty* with no author hereafter) (Prague: Státní historický ústav v Praze, 1948), and Rostislav Nový, "Doplňky k 'Účtům hradu Karlštejna z let 1423–1434,'" *Folia Historica Bohemica* 10 (1986): 193–203.

Continuities in International Trade

High-End Commodities

One of the most obvious observations from the aforementioned account books is how apparently unproblematically customers from Prague and Karlštejn could attain the usual commodities of international long-distance trade.³⁴ Both sources contain numerous entries that record purchases of western European cloth, silk, spices, high-priced wine, and Mediterranean delicacies.³⁵ The Karlštejn account books do not always provide the place of acquisition for these high-end commodities, but they were most probably predominantly purchased in Prague, even though itinerant merchants visited the castle as well.³⁶ The same sources also contain a conspicuous example of continued medium-distance trade within the Lands of the Bohemian Crown. During the fifteenth century, the Bohemian Crown encompassed several constitutionally independent territories—the kingdom of Bohemia, the margraviate of Moravia, the Silesian duchies, and both Upper and Lower Lusatia. All these territories were ruled by personal union by the king of Bohemia. The Crown Lands took different trajectories during the Hussite Revolution, with most of Bohemia and about half of Moravia leaning toward Hussitism, whereas the three smaller Crown Lands remained Catholic. The anti-Hussite embargo thus theoretically separated territories that formed one constitutional body. However, the Old Town council's bill frequently mentions purchases of so-called "Šwidnica" beer. This brew, which is mentioned on almost every page of the edition, was certainly a prestigious, high-cost beverage, as it was frequently offered to the city's guests. The Karlštejn accounts also contain references to the same "Šwidnica" and—in addition—to "Zittau" beer.³⁷ Just as with the other aforementioned high-end commodities, these beverages probably reached the castle via Prague,³⁸ though their actual origin cannot be determined with certitude. In the Old Town bill, "Šwidnica" beer often appears together with "Turnov" beer, named after the North Bohemian town of Turnov. From a logistical point of view, the regular import of beer from Turnov, which was controlled by Hussites, seems more realistic than from the Catholic towns of Zittau in Upper Lusatia or

³⁴Jaroslav Čechura, "Zum Konsumniveau in Ostmittel- und Westmitteleuropa in der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts," in *Westmitteleuropa, Ostmitteleuropa. Vergleiche und Beziehungen. Festschrift für Ferdinand Seibt zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Winfried Eberhard et al. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992), 180–84; Miloš Garkisch, "Běžný život na hradě Karlštejně za husitských válek ve světle hradních účtů," in *Sborník k počtě Evy a Karla Waskových, západočeských archivářů*, ed. Marie Wasková (Plzeň: Marie Wasková, 2011), 86–89.

³⁵Only the Karlštejn account books systematically record the purchase of cloth and spices. The latter are mentioned so frequently that it is not feasible to enumerate the individual evidence. Cloth from Aachen: *Účty*, 157; from Leuven: *Účty*, 69; from Nuremberg: *Účty*, 69, 87. Bouccasin: *Účty*, 22, 69, 129, 162. On one occasion the garrison exchanged cloth from Mechelen for beer and Austrian wine in Prague: *Účty*, 23–24. Silk: *Účty*, 69, 129, 161. "Gallic" wine: *Účty*, 131, 133. "Roman" wine: *Berní knihy*, 160–67, 169, 171. Wine from Austria: *Účty*, 105; from Greece: *Účty*, 130; *Berní knihy*, 153, 159, 163, 166–67, 169. Malvasia: *Berní knihy*, 158–61, 163–71. Other sweet wine: *Účty*, 157, 163; *Berní knihy*, 160, 164. Figs: *Účty*, 21, 130; *Berní knihy*, 159, 163, 166–67, 169, 171. Almonds: *Účty*, 130; *Berní knihy*, 153, 159, 161, 163, 166–67, 169, 171. Rice: *Účty*, 130; *Berní knihy*, 153, 161, 163, 166–67.

³⁶In 1424, one of these merchants brought, among other things, a consignment of figs, almonds, raisins, and olive oil to the castle, *Účty*, 37. See also note 78.

³⁷"Šwidnica" beer: *Účty*, 163; "Zittau" beer: *Účty*, 56, 64.

³⁸Čechura, "Konsumniveau," 183; Garkisch, "Běžný život," 89. However, the entries concerning "Zittau" beer specifically cover delivery. It seems possible that the carters in question shipped beer directly from Upper Lusatia to Karlštejn.

Świdnica in Silesia. It is therefore possible that “Świdnica” beer refers merely to beer “brewed in the style of Świdnica,” and yet the Catholic town of Olomouc in Moravia, for example, definitely imported its “Świdnica” beer from Silesia.³⁹ It seems therefore likely that the “Świdnica” beer of the Old Town bill is also a designation of origin rather than of variety. This means that at least in 1429–1430, large quantities of beer from Silesia reached the Hussite capital, representing a most blatant failure of the anti-Hussite embargo. Finally, this picture is also confirmed by the eyewitness-report that the Basel council father John Nider (d. 1438) related to his peer, John of Ragusa (d. 1443), in January 1432.⁴⁰ According to Nider, an envoy of the Catholic West Bohemian town of Cheb had recently journeyed to Prague, and he maintained that the city’s markets were filled with food, wine, cloth, textiles, and salt and that only spices were allegedly in short supply.⁴¹

It is clear from the aforementioned that demand for international high-end commodities could be satisfied in Hussite Prague throughout the war. As Jaroslav Čechura has pointed out, the account books furthermore prove that customers were both willing and able to pay for these items.⁴² This suggests that prices for such high-end commodities were generally tolerable—at least for the elite consumers represented in the two sources analyzed here—despite the presumably higher transaction costs caused by the volatile political situation and the war.⁴³

Metals

Traditionally, these long-distance trade commodities were mainly paid for with silver and copper from the “treasure chest” of the kingdom, the mining town of Kutná Hora some seventy kilometers east of Prague.⁴⁴ When the political upheavals of the first war years seriously damaged mining activities, however, the effects were certainly felt in the capital as well,⁴⁵ although mining continued despite the war.⁴⁶ This is suggested, among other things, by Sigismund’s attempt to prevent the export of lead from Poland to Bohemia in 1424.⁴⁷ Besides its usage in late medieval artillery, lead also played a significant role in mining, where

³⁹Kaar, *Wirtschaft, Krieg und Seelenheil*, 148.

⁴⁰John of Ragusa, “Tractatus quomodo Bohemi reducti sunt ad unitatem ecclesiae,” in *Monumenta conciliorum generalium seculi decimi quinti. Concilium Basiliense. Scriptorum*, vol. 1, ed. Ernst Birk and František Palacký (Vienna: Officina Typographica Aulae et Status, 1857), 141 (no. 72; Nuremberg; January 5, 1432).

⁴¹Birk and Palacký, *Monumenta conciliorum generalium*, 1:141: “victualia tamen habent [Hussitae] in vino, pane, vestitu, sale et hujusmodi in notabili copia.... Species aromaticae solum in Bohemia sunt carissimae.”

⁴²Čechura, “Mor, krize a husitská revoluce,” 301.

⁴³On the development of prices for high-end commodities in general, cf. the material collected by Graus, *Český obchod se suknem ve 14. a počátkem 15. století*, 93–105; František Graus, *Dějiny venkovského lidu v Čechách v době předhusitské, vol. 2, Dějiny venkovského lidu od poloviny 13. století do roku 1419* (Prague: NČSAV, 1957), 421–30.

⁴⁴František Graus, “Die Handelsbeziehungen Böhmens zu Deutschland und Österreich im 14. und zu Beginn des 15. Jahrhunderts: Eine Skizze,” *Historica* 2 (1960): 105–10; Schenk, *Nürnberg und Prag*, 44–46; Peter Spufford, *Money and Its Use in Medieval Europe*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 110–11, 124–25, 137–38, 269–70 and 343.

⁴⁵Jiří Kejř, *Právní život v husitské Kutné Hoře* (Prague: NČSAV, 1958), 89–90; Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, 2:1165–66, 1228–33. Between 1421 and 1424, Kutná Hora was under the direct control of Prague, before the Hussite radicals seized control of the town. Cf. as well Petr Čornej, *Lipanská křižovatka. Příčiny, průběh a historický význam jedné bitvy* (Prague: Lidové noviny, 1992), 61–63, and Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, 1:127–35 for the economic consequences of the ensuing mining crisis.

⁴⁶Kejř, *Právní život v husitské Kutné Hoře*, 90–94.

⁴⁷František Palacký, ed., *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hussitenkriege in Böhmen*, vol. 1 (Prague: Friedrich Tempsky, 1873), 333–34 (no. 290; Diósgyőr, March 30 or early April 1424); dating deduced

it was used in the process of extracting other, more valuable metals, especially silver and copper, from raw ore.⁴⁸ Before 1419, the mines of Kutná Hora had been among the most important customers of Polish lead,⁴⁹ and it is therefore certainly no accident that control of the traffic in this commodity became an issue in the fight against Hussitism.

If the import of lead into the kingdom continued, so did the export of precious and non-noble metals from Bohemia, even if probably at a considerably smaller scale than before. Although a passage in the so-called peace of Zdice from 1424 forbidding the export of gold, silver, and grain from the kingdom seems to be merely a variant of the usual formulations found in this type of document,⁵⁰ there is also positive evidence confirming the export of raw ore from Bohemia. Several years ago, Miloslav Polívka called attention to the account books of the city of Nuremberg's copper smelting works.⁵¹ These books show that between 1432 and 1434, relatively large quantities of the traditionally sought-after ore from Kutná Hora were being processed in Nuremberg. Some of this ore was purchased from an unnamed Prague merchant;⁵² some from one Peter Quetzer, a former Nuremberg resident, who in March 1436 appears in Nuremberg's correspondence along with his Prague-based business associate, Arnold Harrer, as a burgher of the same city.⁵³ Other middlemen from the capital presumably mediated contacts between Kutná Hora and merchants from western Bohemia, who then sold the ore on to Germany.⁵⁴

Objects of Art and Manuscripts

In addition to this traditional metal trade, Hussite Prague possibly also became a trade hub for a new and perhaps less obvious export article: objects of (religious) art. Two papal letters from 1426 and 1431 suggest such commercial activity.⁵⁵ In the said letters, Martin V forbade every orthodox Christian to purchase books, chalices, bells, crucifixes, monstrances, gems, altar furniture, or liturgical garments from Hussites.⁵⁶ These stipulations have no precursors in canon

from Sigismund's itinerary as reconstructed by Pál Engel and Norbert C. Tóth, ed., *Itineraria regum et reginarum (1382–1438)* (Budapest: Kiadja a Magyar Tudományos Akad., 2005), 115–16.

⁴⁸Lothar Sulzing, "Verhüttung silberhaltiger Kupfererze," in *Europäische Technik im Mittelalter 800–1400: Tradition und Innovation. Ein Handbuch*, ed. Ute Lindgren (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1996), 272–76.

⁴⁹Danuta Molenda, "Der polnische Bleibergbau und seine Bedeutung für den europäischen Bleimarkt vom 12. bis 17. Jahrhundert," in *Montanwirtschaft Mitteleuropas vom 12. bis 17. Jahrhundert. Stand, Wege und Aufgaben der Forschung*, ed. Werner Kroker and Ekkehard Westermann (Bochum: Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum, 1984), 194.

⁵⁰Karl Siegl, ed., "Briefe und Urkunden zur Geschichte der Hussitenkriege: Aus dem Egerer Stadtarchive," *Zeitschrift des deutschen Vereines für die Geschichte Mährens und Schlesiens* 22 (1918): 56 (no. 23; Zdice, ca. October 16, 1424).

⁵¹Polívka, "K 'černému obchodu' s kutnohorskou mědí v husitské době," 25–34. Only the account books for the years 1432–1434 survive.

⁵²Polívka, "K 'černému obchodu' s kutnohorskou mědí v husitské době," 30.

⁵³Polívka, "K 'černému obchodu' s kutnohorskou mědí v husitské době," 30; StAN BB, no. 12, f. 145v–146r (Nuremberg, March 5, 1436). Cf. Schenk, *Nürnberg und Prag*, 163.

⁵⁴Cf. notes 73 and 74.

⁵⁵Saxonian State Archives Dresden (StAD), 10001 Ältere Urkunden, no. 6012 (Rome, January 15, 1426); Augustin Theiner, ed., *Vetera monumenta historica Hungariam sacram illustrantia, vol. 2, Ab Innocentio PP. VI. usque ad Clementem PP. VII., 1352–1526* (Rome: Typ. Vaticanis, 1870), 209 (no. 367; Rome, January 9, 1431).

⁵⁶StAD, 10001 Ältere Urkunden, no. 6012: "libros, calices, campanas aut etiam ecclesiarum et monasteriorum ac sacrorum locorum ecclesiasticarumque personarum predictorum bona." Theiner, *Vetera*

law on the papal embargo, implying that they reacted to actual practices following the abolition, depredation, and destruction of Catholic institutions in the kingdom of Bohemia and the surrounding countries during the Hussite Revolution. Pre-Hussite Prague had housed lively artistic workshops that also catered to international costumers.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the city was home to many religious institutions, which were despoiled during the revolution. It seems reasonable to assume that not all of their treasures fell victim to radical Hussite iconoclasts.⁵⁸ Instead, some of the capital's inhabitants may well have taken advantage of their expertise or of the opportunities presented by the political circumstances, even if no positive evidence has been found of Hussite vendors from Prague selling precious objects or manuscripts to Catholic costumers to date.⁵⁹ Interestingly enough, though, the Karlštejn account books provide examples of the opposite case, that is, Hussite buyers acquiring objects of art from the Catholic garrison. Faced with the challenge of covering the castle's expenses after its regular incomes had run dry, the garrison resorted to monetizing bullion and precious objects salvaged from defunct Catholic institutions.⁶⁰ Many of these items were sold in the Catholic West Bohemian town of Plzeň, others directly to itinerant merchants who visited the castle.⁶¹ Although we do not know about the religious affiliation of these merchants, at least two other customers were undoubtedly confessed Hussites—sometime in 1434 the burgrave himself sold “the old bible and the great psalterium of the Vyšehrad [chapter]” to the Old Town official Janko, notary of the Prague Týn (*notarius Ungelth*).⁶² In the very same year, no other than the Hussite archbishop-elect, Jan Rokycana (d. 1471) bought books from the castle's holdings for the library of the Czech university nation.⁶³ More liturgical objects were sold to a certain Francis, chaplain to an unnamed papal auditor.⁶⁴ Since 1433, emissaries of the Council of Basel had been visiting Prague on a regular basis to negotiate the Compacts. Francis most probably was a chaplain to John of Palomar (d. 1450), one of the council's chief negotiators, who bore the title of papal auditor.⁶⁵ Interestingly, Francis claimed that he bought these objects on behalf of one “dominus Julianus,” which makes one think of the president of the council himself, cardinal Giuliano Cesarini (d. 1444). Whatever the case may be, if the buyer was indeed a member of the council's embassy to Bohemia, he might well have conducted similar purchases elsewhere in Prague, anticipating the idea of his famous contemporary

monumenta historica Hungarum sacram illustrantia, 2:209: “calices, cruces, monstancias, iocalia, paramenta, ornamenta et quecunque alia clenodia ad ornatum et usum ecclesiarum spectancia et pertinencia.”

⁵⁷Martin Musílek, “Die Handelskontakte der Prager Bürger in der Zeit um 1400,” in *Die Prager Pietà in Bern*, ed. Susan Marti et al. (Prague: Národní galerie v Praze, 2018), 115–25.

⁵⁸Milena Bartlová, “Hussite Iconoclasm,” in *From Hus to Luther: Visual Culture in the Bohemian Reformation (1380–1620)*, ed. Kateřina Horníčková and Michal Šroněk (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 57–70.

⁵⁹Exiled Catholic merchants from Prague, however, assisted in the monetizing of the treasures some religious communities managed to salvage from Bohemia, cf. Ondřej Vodička, “‘Und ap es geschege, das es wieder gut zu behem wurde.’ Katolíctí exulanti z husitských měst,” in *Středověké město: politické proměny a sociální inovace*, ed. Martin Nodl (Prague: Filosofia, 2019), 25–28.

⁶⁰Garkisch, “Běžný život,” 79.

⁶¹For an example cf. note 78.

⁶²Účty, 163. On the dating of this and the following entries, see Účty, 7. This Janko may be the same as one Jan, who according to Václav Vladivoj Tomek, *Dějepis města Prahy*, vol. 5, 2nd ed. (Prague: Fr. Řivnáč, 1905), 83, held the position of Týn notary in 1428. It seems worth noting here that the post of Týn notary was obviously occupied during the Hussite Wars, suggesting that the custom house was functioning.

⁶³Účty, 161 (June 16, 1434). The transaction took place in Rokycana's house in Prague.

⁶⁴Účty, 162–63.

⁶⁵Šmahel, *Die Basler Kompaktaten mit den Hussiten (1436)*, 17.

Enea Silvio Piccolomini (d. 1464) to buy religious manuscripts in Bohemia, where they were cheap.⁶⁶

Trade Routes

Apart from this obvious example, one cannot help but wonder about the routes by which all the merchandise listed previously left and reached the Hussite capital. One somewhat puzzling piece of evidence to answer this question comes from western Bohemia. In September 1422, King Sigismund settled his debts with one of his many creditors, the Catholic Czech lord John Hanovec of Švamberk. For this purpose, Sigismund pawned to John the revenues generated by two tolls, one of which was levied in the West Bohemian town of Stříbro, the other by the burgrave of neighboring Domažlice.⁶⁷ The charter detailing this pledge then states explicitly that these tolls were to be paid from all the merchandise that was brought through Stříbro on the way from Bavaria, Franconia, Regensburg, and other territories, to Prague or heading the opposite direction.⁶⁸ This means that in spite of the anti-Hussite embargo, both the king and John of Švamberk took for granted the existence of long-distance trade between Upper Germany and Prague, and regarded revenues generated by this trade as a reliable source of income. This charter was not the only example of such a pledge. Moreover, Sigismund also issued not one but several privileges in which he confirmed older transit tolls in western and northern Bohemian towns that lay on trade routes leading to the capital.⁶⁹ Duke Albert V of Habsburg's (d. 1439) repeated attempts to regulate commerce around the South Bohemian town of České Budějovice suggest that the situation in southern Bohemia was no different.⁷⁰ Traffic on the trade routes to Prague therefore seems to have been quite lively, despite the war and the embargo.

Agents of International Trade

Who then populated these roads? According to John Nider, it was mainly “treacherous Christians,” that is, Catholic merchants who supplied the Prague markets.⁷¹ The majority of these sanction-breakers were probably of domestic origin. The Hussite Wars fostered

⁶⁶Rudolf Wolkan, ed., *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini. Briefe aus der Laienzeit (1431–1445), vol. 1, Privatbriefe* (Vienna: Hölder, 1909), 443 (no. 159*; Wiener Neustadt, October 31, 1444): The author asks his Prague correspondent to buy a bible for him in Bohemia because he had been told “that there are some small and poor priests [in Bohemia], who possess books like the ones I desire, and who—out of need—sell them cheaply.” (“Relatum est mihi, [apud Bohemos] plures presbiterculos esse, qui libros venales habent et, sicut paupertas facit, non multum eris exigunt.”) I am grateful to Maria Theisen for drawing my attention to this letter.

⁶⁷Jaromír Čelakovský and Gustav Friedrich, ed., *Codex iuris municipalis regni Bohemiae*, vol. 3 (*CIM 3*) (Prague: Dr. Eduard Grégr a syn, 1948), 40–42 (no. 28; Nuremberg, September 7, 1422).

⁶⁸Čelakovský and Friedrich, *CIM 3*: “zapisujem a zastavujem ... mýto naše, kteréž z věcí kupeckých z Bavor, z Frank, z Řezna a z jiných krajín do krajiny města předřčeného Stříbra sstupující k Praze a zacse do oněch zemí vezeny bývachu.”

⁶⁹Horšovský Týn: Antonín Haas, ed., *Codex iuris municipalis regni Bohemiae*, vol. 4, no. 1 (*CIM 4.1*) (Prague: NČAV, 1954), 335 (no. 228; Nuremberg, August 22, 1422). Přimda: *CIM 4.1*, 337–38 (no. 230; Regensburg, October 1, 1422). Most: *CIM 3*, 80–82 (no. 57; Nuremberg, March 13, 1431).

⁷⁰České Budějovice, County Archives, České Budějovice City Archives, listiny, no. 1426/1 (Vienna, June 8, 1426); Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hussitenkriege in Böhmen*, 2:248–49 (no. 770; Vienna, November 8, 1431).

⁷¹Birk and Palacký, *Monumenta conciliorum generalium*, 1:141 (no. 72; Nuremberg, January 5, 1432): “[Vidualia etc.] eis [Hussitis] per falsos Christianos adducuntur.”

the rise of the predominantly Catholic border towns such as Most, Cheb, Český Krumlov, České Budějovice, and especially Plzeň, to centers of international commerce.⁷² In these towns, merchants from Germany or Austria could meet safely with their Bohemian counterparts, who then presumably mediated the onward or incoming transport of merchandise to or from the Hussite centers. The aforementioned account books of the Nuremberg copper smelting works, for instance, contain the names of at least five merchants from Cheb who procured Kutná Hora copper for the plant.⁷³ A sixth Cheb merchant was officially commissioned by the city's council to obtain as much copper from Kutná Hora as possible in May 1429.⁷⁴ Appropriately enough, three merchants from the same town wished to be absolved from the sin of trading with heretics in 1432.⁷⁵ One year later, the Council of Basel found it necessary to authorize its delegates to Bohemia to absolve repentant heretics and sanction-breakers en route to Prague, again attesting to the fact that the problem was widely spread in the Catholic parts of the kingdom.⁷⁶

There is, however, also evidence that at least some foreign merchants were not afraid to personally conduct business outside the Catholic strongholds. One such trader was a certain Conrad, whom scholarship has identified with Conrad II Imhoff, a member of a well-known Nuremberg family.⁷⁷ Conrad conducted extensive business with the Karlštejn garrison during the 1420s, buying bullion and precious objects from the castle's holdings in return for salted fish, raw materials for the production of gunpowder, and selected high-end commodities.⁷⁸ It seems plausible that Conrad or some of the other merchants mentioned in the Karlštejn account books occasionally extended their journeys to the nearby capital. Further examples of such itinerant traders can be found in the Nuremberg *Briefbücher*. A letter written in January 1428 by the city's councilors to the council of the Bavarian town of Landsberg am Lech, for instance, testifies to the curious case of one Claus Port via the extraordinary story of the Nuremberg burgher Eberhard Grefenberger.⁷⁹ Grefenberger, who worked for one of the grand Nuremberg merchant-companies engaged in frequent trade with Bohemia,⁸⁰ participated in the fourth anti-Hussite crusade of 1427, where he was taken prisoner by the Hussites and transported to Prague. Through the mediation of a "pious woman" (probably a local Catholic), he looked for "merchants" and "guests" who could assist with his release. The woman established contact with Claus Port, a merchant from Landsberg. Port eventually agreed to vouch for Grefenberger and, together,

⁷²See Janáček, "Der böhmische Aussenhandel in der Hälfte [sic] des 15. Jahrhunderts," 47; Kaar, *Wirtschaft, Krieg und Seelenheil*, 309–11. The numismatic evidence also attests to the increased importance of Bohemia's western border regions for international trade. Several mid-fifteenth-century coin hoards from western Bohemia show conspicuous quantities of gold coins characteristic of international long-distance trade. Roman Zaoral, "Nálezy zlatých mincí grošového období na území Čech. Příspěvek k oběhu uherských dukátů v Čechách," *Slovenská numizmatika* 11 (1990): 121–27 with map 2.

⁷³Polívka, "K černému obchodu s kutnohorskou mědí v husitské době," 29–30.

⁷⁴Polívka, "Wirtschaftliche Beziehungen Nürnbergs mit den 'böhmischen Ketzern' in den Jahren 1419 bis 1434," 11–12.

⁷⁵Birk and Palacký, *Monumenta conciliorum generalium*, 1:217 (no. 119; Nuremberg, April 21, 1432).

⁷⁶Gilles Charlier, "Liber de legationibus concilii Basiliensis," in *Monumenta conciliorum generalium*, vol. 1, ed. Ernst Birk and František Palacký (no. 165; Basel, April 1433), 380.

⁷⁷Miloslav Polívka, "Plzeň v závěru husitské revoluce," in *Plzeň v husitské revoluci: Hilaria Litoměřického "Historie města Plzně," její edice a historický rozbor*, ed. Josef Hejnic and Miloslav Polívka (Prague: ÚČSSD ČSAV, 1987), 285.

⁷⁸*Účty*, 16, 28, 35, 37, 39, 48, 73, 77, 80. Cf. note 36.

⁷⁹StAN BB, no. 8, f. 3v (Nuremberg, January 10, 1428).

⁸⁰Kaar, *Wirtschaft, Krieg und Seelenheil*, 117.

the two men traveled from Prague to Nuremberg, where Grefenberger assisted Port in settling a debt with another merchant. The story conveys a picture of remarkable confessional cohabitation in the Hussite capital. Of interest to us, however, is the obvious presence of “merchants” and “guests” in the city despite the anti-Hussite embargo. By the term *guests*, one would normally understand foreign merchants who did not hold citizenship in Prague, but in Hussite Prague the term may also have referred to German Prague natives who had lost full citizenship in 1421.⁸¹ Yet Claus Port was clearly a foreign merchant who moved about the city freely before he continued to pursue his business interests in Nuremberg.⁸²

Not every business trip, however, went as smoothly as Port’s. Several other letters preserved in the *Briefbücher* inform us that convoys of Nuremberg merchants were stopped on their way to and from Bohemia by local authorities who confiscated their merchandise on the grounds of sanction-breaking, prompting the council to complain. One particularly interesting example explicitly points to Prague. In 1426, the Catholic Czech lord Hanuš of Kolovrat had the Nuremberg burgher Hans Imhoff arrested for sanction-breaking while Imhoff traveled through Kolovrat’s West Bohemian domains.⁸³ Imhoff, another member of the aforementioned Nuremberg family, spent no less than two years in custody and was released only upon royal intervention.⁸⁴ The *Briefbücher* contain exceptionally rich material on this case. What is most important here are the accusations Kolovrat brought forward against his prisoner. According to a Nuremberg letter from October 1426, Kolovrat claimed that Imhoff had delivered high-end commodities, spices, and other merchandise to “the enemies of God, Christendom and our gracious lord, [King Sigismund].”⁸⁵ One month later, a second letter specified that, according to Imhoff’s jailer, the culprit had traded with “those of Prague and the Hussites.”⁸⁶ Kolovrat probably instrumentalized these accusations in an elaborate attempt to put pressure on the Nuremberg council but, even if this were the case, there’s no smoke without fire. In other cases of Nuremberg merchants detained in Bohemia, there is no mention of alleged sanction-breaking.⁸⁷ Also, the Nuremberg letters to Kolovrat show a conspicuous wariness, suggesting that the

⁸¹Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, 2:1161.

⁸²Port even seems to have claimed later that he had obtained Prague citizenship. However, it is unknown if and at what point he did become a Prague burgher, and what motivated his decision.

⁸³Kolovrat resided at Krašov Castle on the river Berounka. The Berounka constituted an important line of communication between western and central Bohemia, passing Beroun and Karlštejn, and eventually entering the Vltava just south of Prague.

⁸⁴Hans Imhoff’s arrest is notorious in scholarship on the anti-Hussite embargo. Cf. most recently, Kaar, *Wirtschaft, Krieg und Seelenheil*, 263–69.

⁸⁵StAN BB, no. 7, f. 108r. Edition: Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hussitenkriege in Böhmen*, 1:475 (no. 420; Nuremberg, October 18, 1426): “[Your Well-born wrote us], wie derselb Hanns Imm Hof die veynd Gots, der ganzen cristenheit und unsers gnedigisten herren des römischen etc. künigs gesterckt, in kawffmanschaft, spezerey und andre dink zugefürt und geraicht sülle haben.” The term *kaufmannschaft* points to high-end commodities, as opposed to victuals and other bulk goods.

⁸⁶StAN BB, no. 7, f. 114r; Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hussitenkriege in Böhmen*, 1:477 (no. 424, Nuremberg, November 9, 1426): “Als her Hanns Colowrat denselben Hansen Im Hof gefangen hat und in beschuldigt, daz er den von Prage und Hussen spezerey czugefürt süll haben....” If this distinction is not accidental, this could mean that the exceptionally well-informed Kolovrat accused his prisoner not only of entertaining illicit relations with the capital, but also with the Hussite radicals in western Bohemia.

⁸⁷Cf., for instance, StAN BB, no. 10, f. 19v–20r, 21r–v, 23v–24v, 33v–34r. (Nuremberg, July 28–August 26, 1432), concerning the imprisonment of the Nuremberg burgher Hans Tollinger at Švamberk Castle in western Bohemia. Polívka, “Wirtschaftliche Beziehungen Nürnbergs mit den

councilors were seriously concerned for the prisoner's life and well-being.⁸⁸ Finally, Imhoff himself traveled to the royal court immediately after his release, presumably to clear his name of the allegation of trading with Hussites.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, according to Zikmund Winter, the same Hans Imhoff was back in Prague no later than 1433, when he sued a debtor before the Old Town council.⁹⁰ This suggests that the former prisoner continued to conduct business in Hussite Bohemia well before the anti-Hussite embargo was officially put on hold in summer 1436. Unfortunately, the manuscript Winter drew on is now lost.⁹¹ His further excerpts from the same manuscript, however, show that Imhoff was not the only foreigner litigating before the Old Town council during the war, again attesting to the continued presence of foreign merchants in the Hussite capital.⁹²

Possible Ruptures in International Trade

Disruptive Factors

Although the evidence discussed so far seems to prompt the conclusion that Prague's international trade was hardly affected by the Hussite Wars or the embargo, this may not be entirely true. First, there was undoubtedly a break in the social fabric of international trade. Scholars have calculated that during the first months of the revolution, approximately 10 to 12.5 percent of the population left the Hussite capital,⁹³ and many of these emigrants belonged to the affluent, well-connected Old Town merchant-elite.⁹⁴ Laurence of Březová, for instance, reports that in spring 1420 food, grain, and various kinds of high-priced beverages were found in many of the abandoned houses, goods that had been hoarded by the owners of the houses with the intent to profit from the demand created by the soon-to-arrive royal court.⁹⁵ The city as a business location, therefore, certainly lost part of its

'böhmischen Ketzern' in den Jahren 1419 bis 1434," 16, claims that Tollinger was detained for sanction-breaking; however, the letters mention neither Hussites nor illicit trade.

⁸⁸Sanction-breakers were regarded as aiding and abetting heretics, by which they committed treason to the Christian faith. In consequence, they were to be prosecuted like heretics themselves.

⁸⁹StAN BB, no. 8, f. 117r (Nuremberg, February 26, 1429).

⁹⁰Winter, *Dějiny řemesel a obchodu v Čechách v 14. a 15. století*, 894.

⁹¹See note 31.

⁹²Winter, *Dějiny řemesel a obchodu v Čechách v 14. a 15. století*, 894: merchants from Świdnica and Wrocław coming to an agreement before the Old Town council in 1435; one Nicolas Krucburg from Zittau sued for saffron owed in Prague in 1436. The latter could be identical with "Nicolas Crewczburg of Prague," who in 1421 conducted business in Wrocław, sending sable skins from Zittau to Görlitz. Otto Stobbe, ed., "Mitteilungen aus den Breslauer Signaturbüchern," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens* 7 (1866): 191 (Wrocław, January 2, 1421). On such exiles cf. as well note 94.

⁹³Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, 2:1159; Vodička, "'Und ap es geschege, das es wieder gut zu behem wurde.' Katoličtí exulanti z husitských měst," 17. Specifically on the Old Town, Martin Musílek, "Formy komunikace doby husitské: listy pražských obcí proti odběhlým měšťanům aneb vysoká hra o velké majetky," in *Komunikace ve středověkých městech*, ed. Martin Capský et al. (Opava: Slezská univerzita, 2014), 153.

⁹⁴For examples cf. Vodička, "'Und ap es geschege, das es wieder gut zu behem wurde.' Katoličtí exulanti z husitských měst," 17–36.

⁹⁵Goll, "Vavřince z Březové Kronika Husitská," 379: "Ex recessu itaque voluntario et non voluntario hospitum multarum domorum potus diversi, blada ceteraque ad victum spectancia, que pro adventu regis Hungarorum et aliorum hospitum Pragam procurata propter lucrum fuerant, sunt derelicta." Laurence reports that confiscated "old beer," as well as Malvasia and French, Austrian, and domestic wines were subsequently sold at the Old Town council's behest at a favorable price.

credit along with the individuals who fled or were forced to leave. Second, it is very likely that the ongoing war caused occasional bottlenecks in international trade and supply, even if—after the initial crusader attack—the city was spared from sieges and large-scale destruction. Third, the armed conflict and the anti-Hussite embargo undoubtedly affected Prague’s staple right and the city’s position in international transit trade. Changes in international transit routes, as much as the economic emancipation of the border towns, substantially altered the patterns of trade in the once Prague-centered system—a development that could not easily be reversed, even if the Praguers hurried to have their traditional trade privileges confirmed after the peace agreement with Sigismund.⁹⁶

Two Crucial Commodities: Gunpowder and Salt

If one looks for concrete evidence for ruptures in trade patterns, though, it is not easy to put one’s finger on the problem. The absence of sound quantitative evidence prevents any conclusive statistical analysis. Nevertheless, there are some sources that require detailed discussion here because they might point to temporary ruptures in Prague’s supply with two key strategic commodities: raw materials for the production of gunpowder and salt.

During the Hussite period, there was no significant domestic production of sulfur or saltpeter; both had to be imported from outside Bohemia or requisitioned by force.⁹⁷ According to the Karlštejn account books, the garrison routinely bought crossbows in Prague or had broken armaments fixed there.⁹⁸ However, the raw material for the powder production seems to have come rather from Nuremberg.⁹⁹ As Miloslav Polívka has pointed out, weapons and other strategic goods were—besides food—a favorite booty of plundering Hussite armies.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, on at least one occasion, Hussite soldiers even explicitly demanded sulfur and saltpeter in ransom for Catholic prisoners.¹⁰¹ Together, this evidence points to at least temporary disruptions in supply, most probably caused by the sudden and excessive demand created by the large-scale armed conflict.¹⁰²

More importantly, though, the kingdom of Bohemia also lacked domestic salt mines. Salt constituted one of the kingdom’s most important import articles throughout the Middle Ages. Consequently, an efficient Catholic embargo on salt could have seriously damaged the Hussite population of the kingdom, and references to salt and the trade in salt therefore

⁹⁶Alexandra Kaar, “Business as Usual? Sigismund’s Trade Privileges for the Royal Towns of Bohemia,” *Husitský Tábor 22* (2018): 39–40 with table 2 at page 50.

⁹⁷Miloslav Polívka, “Prager Waffenhandwerke des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts. Zum Stand und zu den Veränderungen in der Hussitenzeit,” in *Das Andere Wahrnehmen. Beiträge zur europäischen Geschichte. August Nitschke zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Martin Kintzinger et al. (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 1991), 320.

⁹⁸*Účty*, 22, 129, 155.

⁹⁹*Účty*, 37, 73. On both occasions, sulfur and saltpeter were bought from the merchant Conrad, who presumably came from Nuremberg (cf. note 77). The other entries in question on pages 30, 38, 62, and 67 do not indicate where exactly the material for the armament of the castle’s cannons was bought, though the cinders mentioned on page 62 seem to have been produced locally.

¹⁰⁰Polívka, “Prager Waffenhandwerke des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts. Zum Stand und zu den Veränderungen in der Hussitenzeit,” 320–21.

¹⁰¹Kaar, *Wirtschaft, Krieg und Seelenheil*, 157–58. Significantly, the prisoners came from Salzburg. Merchants from this town traditionally mediated part of the trade between Europe’s principal supplier of saltpeter, Venice, and the kingdom of Bohemia.

¹⁰²Polívka, “Prager Waffenhandwerke des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts. Zum Stand und zu den Veränderungen in der Hussitenzeit,” 316.

deserve particular attention. If one scrutinizes the Karlštejn account books for salt, one finds regular purchases of the mineral, suggesting a reliable supply throughout the war.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, there was a tendency to buy greater quantities at once than with other, more perishable victuals. Unfortunately, the accounts rarely give the place of purchase. On the two occasions it is mentioned, the mineral was purchased in the Catholic towns of Plzeň and Strakonice, respectively;¹⁰⁴ on other occasions the salt seems to have been delivered directly to the castle.¹⁰⁵ This could indicate that the garrison did not buy their salt in Prague, where they purchased most of the other imported articles that were consumed at the castle.

At first glance, this supposition is supported by two other sources, which independently and explicitly mention a shortage of salt in Hussite Prague. First, the *Old Czech Annals* report supply problems during the siege of the city by the crusader armies in the summer of 1420.¹⁰⁶ Second, a letter drafted in April 1427 in Zittau informs us that at the time, prices for food and especially salt had risen sharply in Prague.¹⁰⁷ Upon closer inspection, however, neither source supports the assumption that these were indeed effects of the anti-Hussite embargo. Although it seems logical that the embargo was implemented most rigorously during the first anti-Hussite crusade and that salt transports to Bohemia were temporarily suspended, it is much more likely that the alleged shortage in salt was a result of the general insecurity of the roads during the crusader invasion, the large influx of soldiers and refugees to Prague, and the overall effects of the siege. Moreover, it is not even entirely clear that there indeed was a shortage of salt in Prague in the summer of 1420. The anonymous chronicler evidently aims at contrasting the abundance of supplies in the well-prepared city with the negligence of the allegedly ill-prepared crusaders.¹⁰⁸ What generates even more doubt, though, is the fact that the information comes from a version of the *Old Czech Annals*, which is most probably not contemporary.¹⁰⁹ As opposed to this, the second source is

¹⁰³ *Účty*, 22, 46, 72, 78, 113, 136.

¹⁰⁴ *Účty*, 22 and 78.

¹⁰⁵ *Účty*, 46, 72, 113.

¹⁰⁶ František Šimek, ed., *Staré letopisy české z vratislavského rukopisu novočeským pravopisem* (Prague: Historický spolek, 1937), 32–33: “At the time [of the siege], everything was cheap in Prague except for salt; everything else was in abundance and especially wine and bread and silver.” (“Té chvíle bylo v Praze všechno lacino kromě jediné soli; ale jiného všechno dosti v hojnosti bylo, a zvláště víno, chléb a stříbro.”) Cf. as well František Šimek and Miloslav Kaňák, ed., *Staré letopisy české z rukopisu Křižovnického* (Prague: SNKLHU, 1959), 63.

¹⁰⁷ Palacký, *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hussitenkriege in Böhmen*, 1:497–98, at 497 (no. 434; Zittau, April 12, 1427): “Lord John of Vartenberk reports that food in general is very expensive in Prague, especially salt. For a bushel of salt, one has to pay one score and 20 groschen.” (“Ouch ... zo saget her John von Wartenberg[,] daz allerley spyse koff czu male tawir sey in Praga[.] Sunderlich eynen scheffel salcz mus man kouffen vm eyn schock vnd XX groschen.”)

¹⁰⁸ Šimek, *Staré letopisy české z vratislavského rukopisu novočeským pravopisem*, 33: “For the king’s army, however, everything was expensive, even if the soldiers received [supplies] from almost everywhere. Notably, they had to buy bread and beer at a high price.” (“U vojště pak králové, kakž koli jim téměř odevšad vezli, však jest [sic] pro to draho bylo, a zvláště chléb a pivo, to jim draho bylo.”) Cf. as well Šimek and Kaňák, *Staré letopisy české z rukopisu Křižovnického*, 63.

¹⁰⁹ František Michal Bartoš, “Úvod,” in Šimek, *Staré letopisy české z vratislavského rukopisu novočeským pravopisem*, IV–XVI; Šimek and Kaňák, *Staré letopisy české z rukopisu Křižovnického*, 10, 14–18; Čornej, “Původní vrstva starých letopisů českých,” XX. The two manuscripts containing the passage in question were compiled several decades after the events. It should be noted that neither the eyewitness Laurence of Březová nor the oldest, almost contemporary versions of the *Annals* say anything about the supply conditions in the besieged capital.

well-informed and unquestionably contemporary.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, the letter itself offers a very plausible alternative explanation (to the embargo) for the rise in prices. Immediately before talking about prices, the author summarizes the preceding political events, which included a break between the moderate Prague Hussites and the radicals, which was followed by bloody skirmishes.¹¹¹ The shortage of salt in spring 1427 thus was most probably a symptom of the clash between the belligerent Hussite factions rather than an effect of the anti-Hussite embargo.

In opposition to the discussed sources, we also have a considerable number of documents which show that, at other times, strategic goods as well as salt were definitely available in Hussite Prague. In 1430, the Old Town council was able to buy lead “for the needs of the community” in the city itself and to acquire sulfur for the production of projectiles.¹¹² Two years later we meet a local powder-maker.¹¹³ The Cheb envoy mentioned previously saw salt offered for sale in Prague in early 1432,¹¹⁴ and one year later, Emperor Sigismund complained to the Council of Basel about the fact that the Hussites had so much of the mineral at their disposal that they could even resell it.¹¹⁵ In 1435, the Old Town council put the salt trade in the city under the supervision of an expert committee, suggesting that there was indeed salt to trade in.¹¹⁶ Finally, we even have independent evidence from the outside in the form of a somewhat curious written statement from the Upper Austrian town of Freistadt, an important trading post for salt.¹¹⁷ When their lord accused them in 1437 of having failed to pay the usual taxes, the Freistadt councilors claimed—among other things—that during the previous war the burghers of their town had been unable to sell as much salt to Bohemia as customary. Instead of invoking the war on the heretics or the anti-Hussite embargo, though, the councilors maintained that their sales problems had been due to an overabundance in Prague of salt exported by their competitors from Meissen!¹¹⁸

Profiteers

In light of the evidence, it is more than clear that the exodus of the Catholic merchants in 1420 did not deprive the inhabitants of the Czech capital of the possibility to acquire

¹¹⁰The author’s confidant was a member of a well-connected Catholic noble family from northern Bohemia. It is easily possible that he had traveled to Prague in person, although the letter does not say so explicitly.

¹¹¹On the history of events Šmahel, *Die Hussitische Revolution*, 2:1398–407.

¹¹²*Berní knihy*, 168, 172, quote at 168: “pro communitate . . . in necessariis.” Cf. as well an entry mentioning the purchase of gunpowder, *Berní knihy*, 149. There is a strong possibility that the powder accounted for in *Účty*, 30, without place of purchase was bought in Prague as well.

¹¹³Wacław Władiwoj Tomek, *Základy starého mstopisu Pražského, vol. 2, Nowé město Pražské* (Prague: Dr. Edward Grégr, 1870), 300: “Mathias parans pulveres.”

¹¹⁴Cf. note 40.

¹¹⁵Gustav Beckmann, ed., *Deutsche Reichstagsakten, vol. 11, Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Sigmund (1433–1435)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898), 268 (no. 139; Basel, November 9, 1433).

¹¹⁶Volf, “Příspěvky k historii obchodních styků s cizinou ve středověku. Obchod solí,” 37.

¹¹⁷Johannes Seidl, *Stadt und Landesfürst im frühen 15. Jahrhundert. Studien zur Städtepolitik Herzog Albrechts V. von Österreich (als deutscher König Albrecht II.) 1411–1439* (Linz: Österreichischer Arbeitskreis für Stadtgeschichtsforschung, 1997), 93–97 (Freistadt, 1437).

¹¹⁸Seidl, *Stadt und Landesfürst im frühen 15. Jahrhundert*, 94, note 409: “We are under the impression that never before has so much salt been shipped from Meissen to Prague as in that very same year [= 1425].” (“bedunkht uns, das man das salcz von Maichssen . . . gen Prag so vast nicht gefürt hat als in disem [1425] jar”).

medium- and long-distance trade merchandise. The gap left by the emigrants was readily filled by members of the Hussite elite, who enjoyed comparable business connections. Prominent examples include the merchant and Old Town councilor Wenceslas Štraboch,¹¹⁹ who appears in the Old Town council's bill as the council's favored supplier for high-end commodities, and Simon of the White Lion,¹²⁰ another prominent Old Town councilor who frequently provided the city fathers with wine for their guests. As opposed to the situation during the ephemeral crusade against King George of Poděbrady (1467–1471), these merchants do not figure in any source from outside Bohemia (that I am aware of).¹²¹ Prague's long-distance traders seem to have been wise enough to stay within Hussite territory, leaving even more room than before to merchants from the Bohemian border towns and to men like Claus Port. The example of the latter, and of his fellow countryman Eberhard Grefenberger, finally suggests that at least the Upper German merchant-companies could rely on personal ties in Hussite Prague that had either survived the political turmoil or were rapidly reestablished after the first revolutionary upheavals;¹²² a fact that becomes even more evident in the case of Peter Quetzer, who permanently moved from Nuremberg to the Czech capital in the middle of the Hussite Wars.¹²³

Conclusion

Assessing the international trade of a medieval city is no easy undertaking, all the more if this city was subject to a large-scale trade embargo. Older research has often employed papal bulls and royal mandates to either reconstruct the actual traffic of merchandise or to assess the effects of the anti-Hussite embargo. As has been shown in this article, this uncritical use of the sources, however, does not allow for reliable assumptions concerning Hussite Prague's international trade. Instead, we should turn to a variety of documentary sources such as account books, contemporary letters, and town books that are far more suitable to study actual trade.

This evidence expands our knowledge in terms of the structures and agents of trade. It could be shown that the markets of Prague were well furnished with imported articles of international long-distance trade throughout the war. Attention has also been drawn to the import of foodstuffs from the Catholic Crown Lands Silesia and Upper Lusatia into the metropolis and to the presence of merchants from these territories in the Hussite capital. As is well known, various centripetal forces threatened to drive the composite monarchy of the Bohemian Crown apart during the Hussite Revolution. Trade links seem to have been less affected and remained a significant bond between Prague and the Catholic Crown Lands in spite of the war and the embargo. Continuities were also found with exports. The metals of the kingdom's mines continued to attract the interest of Upper Germany's centers of metalworking. Merchants from Prague demonstrably acted as intermediaries for the export of Kutná Hora ore to Nuremberg, even if probably at a smaller scale

¹¹⁹Petr Čornej, *Světla a stíny husitství (události—osobnosti—texty—tradice)*. *Výběr z úvah a studií* (Prague: Lidové noviny, 2011), 71, 79, 179–80.

¹²⁰Martin Musílek, "Šimon od Bílého lva. Den pražského měšťana v době vymknuté z kloubů," *Staletá Praha* 32, no. 2 (2016): 2–27.

¹²¹Merchants from Bohemia who were suspected of Hussitism visited Nuremberg in the early 1470s. Cf. Kaar, "Embargoing 'Heretics' in Fifteenth-Century Central Europe," 17.

¹²²Cf. note 79.

¹²³Cf. note 53.

than before the war. The religious conflict also stimulated a fairly new line of business that concentrated in the traditional art market Prague: trade in precious religious objects and books that became available in hitherto unknown quantities after the abolition of many of the kingdom's religious institutions. Further continuities became apparent with regard to the geography and the agents of trade. Sources from western and southern Bohemia allowed the identification of routes of trade and demonstrated anew the well-known dominance of the Upper German merchant-companies in late medieval long-distance trade with Bohemia. There is no doubt, however, that the significance of middlemen from the Catholic towns of the border regions grew during the Hussite Wars. Freed from the capital's claim to the staple right on all imported merchandise, merchants from these towns most probably assumed the role of intermediaries between the neighboring Catholic territories and the Hussite dominated heartland of the kingdom. Unfortunately, this assumption is very hard to prove from the written evidence. By contrast, the sources convey the names of two prominent individuals from Prague who distinguished themselves in trade with those high-end products that reached the city—Wenceslas Štraboch and Simon of the White Lion.

The staggering continuities in Prague's international trade were finally confronted with evidence of possible ruptures. Though we can safely assume that there were indeed occasional bottlenecks in the city's supply, it could be shown that the evidence, which supposedly points to notable ruptures, is ultimately inconclusive. It can be argued, though, that most of the problems that did arise were rather side effects of the ongoing war and political instability rather than of the anti-Hussite embargo. Nevertheless, the same embargo proved to be a useful prism to gain insight into the history of international trade, not only in Hussite Prague but also in early fifteenth-century central Europe in general.