

ANNALES
UNIVERSITATIS MARIAE CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA
LUBLIN — POLONIA

VOL. X, 1

SECTIO G

1963

Z Katedry Teorii Państwa i Prawa UMCS
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BIBLIOTEKA
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Political Thought in the Period of Transition (1350—1450)

Myśl polityczna czasu przełomu (1350—1450)

**Политическая мысль переломного периода
(1350—1450)**

I THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

For Western Europe the years between the middle of the fourteenth and the middle of the fifteenth centuries were a period of restless fermentation. It was a time of great tension, sharp conflict, glaring oppositions — a time of feverish disquietude. At every step contrasts and oppositions were displayed. Extremes were wrecking the established order. Dichotomy pervaded the whole reality disrupting traditional unities.

It was the period when the Church had at the same time two legally elected Popes, and when there co-existed two mutually opposed conceptions of governing the faithful — the idea of the absolute power of the Pope and the doctrine of the supremacy of the General Council.

In England and France the established monarchies were opposed by the newly formed institution of the representation of the Estates.

In the Germanic Empire the thought of the Roman Empire ran counter to the dynastic ambitions of the rulers. This divided policy seems to be reflected in the two-headed eagle placed on the Emperor's coat of arms from the time of Sigismund of Luxemburg.

While Latin remained the language of the Church, the Bible began to be studied in national tongues.

The feudal idea of honour and loyalty was at odds with the brigandage and hired soldiering of the knights. We see, on the one

hand, a cruelly severe attitude towards the subjects, and on the other — a sense of imaginary perfection of chivalry. Discrepancies between tradition and reality became evident in the battlefield, where armoured riders were more and more effectively opposed by mercenaries on foot, increasingly assisted by the artillery.

Unities were split almost in every branch of life. Counterpoint came into use in music, double-entry book-keeping in trade accounts. Even love seemed to reveal two different aspects: universal love was a different aspect of sensuous love, and earthly love was a condition of attaining heavenly love.¹

The medieval image of the universe was going to pieces. The graded hierarchy of the spheres rising upwards through the spheres of the moon, the sun, the stars, towards heaven and going down to the very depths of hell was disappearing. The well-ordered system of worldly matters in which every object and value had its fixed position now began to totter. Those were years when the rule of the old had not yet passed away, and when the new did not yet acquire enough strength.

Europe was going through a period of becoming, a period when feelings of pessimism and depression were contrasted with nervous excitement.

People thought in those days that evil powers had disturbed the order of the world. Indeed, the period of general disquietude began with a series of elemental disasters. The Black Death raging in Europe from 1347 carried off one third of the population. People were alarmed both by dearths recurring in France (1351, 1359, 1418) and by earthquakes which destroyed Villach and scores of parishes in Corinth in 1347—1348. The flooding of considerable areas in the Netherlands in 1377 and 1421 caused wide-spread anxiety.

Uncertainty besetting man everywhere in this fearful world filled him with nervous excitement. A belief in evil forces and a struggle against the powers of hell absorbed pious feelings. The myth of the devil's power assumed the form of religious ecstasy. Sobriety in everyday life alternated with the most fervent outbursts of passionate piety.

Strong emotional tension did not wholly eliminate common sense. People capable of practical activity provided a contrast to exaltation and a mood of excitement. Their effort initiated the technical changes that imperceptibly determined the direction of the development.

¹ J. Huizinga: *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*, Polish transl., Warszawa 1961.

Itinerant mechanics spread the use of wind power and water power by building windmills and watermills. The practical man harnessed the horse to plough the fields when it left the battlefield or the courtyards in which tournaments were held. Rivers were made navigable and roads, provided with rock surfacing, began to be used regularly for transportation. Sailors used compass in their voyages. The hands of the mechanical clock divided the day into twenty-four hours supplanting the older custom of indicating time by reference to prayers said in churches and monasteries. People learned how to distill spirits that came to be regarded as the best protection against the plague. In the near future two inventions were destined to play an important part: gunpowder which began to be used in military operations bringing about an essential change in the methods of warfare, and the spread of the printed word — an efficient means of influencing wide circles of people. Ever after the printed word was to mould social opinions and to inspire deeds. Owing to print ideas gained broad powers of forming thinking. Side by side with inspired orators the printed word, with its durability and wide range, was destined to fashion social relations in a decisive manner.²

Those who were then alive understood neither the causes of the changes that were happening nor the consequences of the events that were taking place. They did not know the way. Their aims were not clear. They were standing at the cross-roads, as it were in twilight diving darkness from light, plagued by elemental and political disasters.

The years of the ruinous Hundred Years' War coincided almost exactly with the period of European ferment. It was a typical dynastic war, lasting for several generations, conducted without any deeper purpose and bringing along with it only poverty and ruin. In the first period of the war Flanders was the object of interest of both sides. For economical reasons the country remained closely connected with England, as the Flemish clothiers were largely dependent on the English wool of which the islanders were sending to Europe every year 130 thousand bales, each weighing 364 pounds.

The immediate cause of the war was the claim of the English King Edward III to the French throne on grounds of blood relationship with the house of Capet. But there were other forces and aspirations behind this Anglo-French dynastic conflict. The initial successes of the

² J. D. Bernal: *Science in History*. Polish translation, Warszawa 1957, and A. C. Crombie: *Medieval and Early Modern Science*, Polish translation, Warszawa 1960.

English were the result of the skilful policy of Edward III, who managed to give his claims the appearance of a national enterprise. For the English it was primarily a war against the immoderate revenues of the Church, several times as high as the king's own, and against the Pope's interference in matters of State.

Unlike England, France suffered defeat as long as her defence depended only on the feudal nobles and her support came from an alliance with the Pope residing in Avignon. As soon as the expulsion of the English invaders became the task of the whole nation, when the peasant Saint Joan of Arc expressed the desire of her people, the fortunes of the war began to look different.

Feudalism suffered losses under the pressure of the national forces but also because of the traditional methods of warfare. In three successive battles: at Crécy-en-Ponthieu in 1346, at Poitiers in 1356 and at Agincourt in 1415 the French feudal knights were defeated by the pedestrian English bowmen. It was also then that the knights heard the roar of cannons for the first time.

With the war dragging on for years the maintenance of an army and the building of a fleet required considerable financial means, usually acquired by imposing taxes. It became clear that States could not carry on any normal activity, much less wage wars, merely on the royal revenues or on loans. To cover the State's expenses it was necessary to introduce a definite system of taxation. That, however, was an excellent opportunity for those on whom taxes were to be imposed to present their political demands. Granting financial supplies they at the same time wanted to have a share in decisions about how to spend the money thus acquired, or at least to have a right of controlling the expenses. Demands were formulated for the representation of the Estates, which were effectively trying to share in the government of the State. Such was the development of the States General in France, which expressed their political demands in the Great March Ordinance of 1357. Fifty-six years later the demands of the States General were repeated by the representatives of Paris University, who in 1413 drafted a project of reform for the insurgents of the French capital. The English Parliament, which from the time of Edward III included two chambers, was also advancing in the same direction.

The Hundred Years' War did not essentially change the balance of powers but it caused a lot of destruction. In 1360 Petrarch called France „a heap of ruin". Towards the end of the war one third of all the land in France lay uncultivated. After the struggle that had lasted a hundred years the English held only Calais, and their rulers boasted

the title of the kings of France, which they used until the nineteenth century. But the war made it clear to those who were then alive that the Christian world contained neither forces nor authorities above the contenders and that the Pope, who took the side of the French, ceased to be an arbitrator of conflicts.

The disintegration of the unity of the Christian world precipitated the process of the formation of new ties. New organisms came into existence and new associations were formed to fill the void left by the decaying universalism. Side by side with political bodies there appeared associations that had economic objectives or else were the result of dynastic policy.

Economic considerations led to the formation of leagues of towns in the Germanic Empire. In the middle of the fourteenth century about eighty towns in Northern Germany formed the Hanseatic League. The other two leagues came into existence somewhat later. The cities on the upper Danube formed the Swabian league with Augsburg and Nuremberg in the lead. In Western Germany cities lying on the Rhine made another league.

The power and fortuity of dynastic aspirations are illustrated by the brief history of the state of Burgundy, which turned the scale of victory in favour of England during the Hundred Years' War. Owing to its dynastic policy the house of Luxemburg extended its influence to Bohemia and Hungary. Poland and Lithuania formed a union under the Jagiellos. In 1397 the Kalmar Union bound together Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Lastly, in the second half of the fifteenth century dynastic marriages joined the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile forming a framework for united Spain.³

But the most durable ties were those in the States where national feelings were aroused. For while dynastic policy was of interest only to the reigning houses and the feudal magnates, and while the leagues of cities represented the interests of the bourgeoisie, the national ties were cherished by the broadest circles of society. Societies were consolidating their interests behind their monarchs, who opposed the feudal anarchy for the sake of safety and stable market. National States were additionally cemented by their mother tongues which were successfully replacing Latin in literature and on the pages of the Bible. The process of national integration within every country was precipitated by dangers from without. In England the feeling of national unity grew stronger in the struggle against papal intervention. In France

³ H. Pirenne: *A History of Europe from the Invasions to the 16th Century*, Book Eight: *European Crisis*, London 1955.

it was the hatred of the English invaders that united the people. The Czech opposition against the German invasion resulted in an awakening of the national consciousness. In Poland the struggle against the aggression of the Teutonic Order inspired national feelings.

The national ties were durable because they were significant for all social classes. They were in keeping with the logic of history, while the other bonds could not last because they were of more temporary character.

The disintegration of Christian unity set in from the top and from the bottom. The top of the hierarchy broke down, as both the Papacy and the Empire lost authority and position. The bottom of the hierarchy was going to ruin under the blows of the revolutionary movements.

The decline of the highest authority was symbolized by Rome, an abandoned, neglected city. The papal court, residing in Avignon since 1314, was outside the city's walls. Nor was the old capital any longer interesting for the Germanic Emperors, who were now busy increasing their hereditary holdings in the East.

Petrarch deplored the cruel fate of the capital of Christendom that made the impression of a provincial town. And yet he had a great admiration for the glorious past of Rome. He sang its greatness in his poems, and was crowned for it with laurel on the Capitol in 1341, receiving at the same time the citizenship of Rome — an honour once so desirable — and the title of master of poetry.

In 1347 on the same Capitol Cola di Rienzo declared himself a „Tribune of the People” and assumed his rule over the city. Petrarch offered his pen and he — his deeds to revive the past glory of Rome. On his banner he had the proud inscription *Roma caput mundi*. At first he was supported by the people and warmly encouraged by Petrarch. But when his attempts threatened the interests of the Roman magnates, the latter turned their power against him, and the embittered and disappointed tribune had to flee from Rome after several months. Seven years later, thanks to the help of Pope Innocent VI, Cola di Rienzo returned to Rome to continue his work. But, fascinated by the past, he did not understand the present; appearance and theatricality kept him from recognizing real values. Lonely and misunderstood he was finally put to death by the Romans, who were more inclined to listen to the flattery of the magnates than make the sacrifices demanded from them by the luckless tribune.⁴

⁴ I. Origo: *Tribune of Rome. A Biography of Cola di Rienzo*, London 1938; V. Fleischer: *Rienzo. The Rise and Fall of Dictator*, London 1948.

Meanwhile at the Avignonese court the thought of moving the Apostolic See back to Rome was clearly maturing. The Church, accused before of simony and luxurious living, had another charge directed against it: that the head of the Church became dependent on the French monarchy. In the years 1314 — 1377, when Avignon was the capital of Christendom, the number of Frenchmen in the College of Cardinals increased alarmingly. The long-lasting succession of French Popes was also causing justified anxiety. Favouring France the Papacy came under criticism for its partiality and thus its return to Rome was precipitated. In 1378 the cardinals met in Rome, for the first time in seventy-five years, to elect the head of the Church. The new Pope, Urban VI, was an Italian, formerly Archbishop of Bari. At the same time the faction of the French cardinals elected another Pope to reside in Avignon. The Church had now two heads, two Apostolic Sees, two centres conferring Church dignities. In this situation it was hard to sustain the authority of St. Peter's successor. Passed was the time when monarchs tried to obtain papal recognition; now two Popes were competing with each other for the favours of secular rulers. The dual leadership caused a split which affected the whole Christianity. There were two separate spheres of influence: the Avignonese and the Roman. The first included France, the kingdom of Naples, Scotland, Castile, Aragon; the second — England, Germany, Bohemia, Poland and Hungary. This grouping was determined not by religious sympathies or considerations, but by the current political situation, which in itself was largely the consequence of the Anglo-French conflict.

To put an end to the growing confusion within the Church the cardinals took an unprecedented step: they convoked the General Council at Pisa in 1409 without the approval of the Popes. The election of a new Pope was to put an end to the Great Schism. But as the formerly elected Popes did not resign, the result of it was a situation in which the Church had as many as three heads. Only in 1417 at the Council of Constance did it become possible to end the dissension and restore a single rule in the Church.

However, the authority that the head of the Church had lost was not easily regained. The Pope was criticized by the representatives of the religio-national opposition, which was initiated in England by Wyclif and in Bohemia by Hus. And inside the Church the adherents of the conciliar movement expounded the doctrine that the council is superior to the Pope. Nor was the prestige of the Papacy increased by the Union of the Western and Eastern Churches solemnly promul-

gated at the Council of Florence in 1439, as it was rejected by the Eastern Church.

The decrease of papal authority was accompanied by a decline of the imperial power in the Christian world. The title of the Emperor, which the German rulers coveted, did not in any degree increase the scanty monarchic prerogatives. Germany consisted of several scores of independent duchies and principalities, ruled by lay and ecclesiastic lords, and of a considerable number of free cities. It was a highly differentiated fabric, without a uniform legal or financial system, and, above all, without strong political leadership. The seven Electors who after 1356 had the constitutional right to nominate and depose the monarch made the accession to the German throne a matter of bargain and intrigue. No wonder that the Luxemburgs, whose rule in divided Germany lasted from 1347 to 1437, directed all their efforts towards strengthening their dynastic position in the East. Charles IV (1347—1378) formed efficient administration in Bohemia and made that country the core of the Luxemburg rule. His son Sigismund, who became the King of Hungary in 1387 and was elected Emperor in 1411, marched into Prague in 1434 after suppressing the national opposition, and continued the dynastic policy of his father. With his death in 1437 the line of Luxemburg became extinct and was replaced by the Habsburgs who were to continue with better results the policy of their predecessors.

The weakness of the Popes and the Emperors was not the only one apparent in the Christian world. The social system with which the Christian Church was linked up was convulsed. The symptoms of the disease of feudalism were becoming manifest.⁵ The system of monetary payment for goods was successfully replacing natural economy, but at the same time increase in the production of goods was checked, as there were not enough consumers. The feudal system did not provide sufficient market for the new kind of economy.⁶ Trying to get more money the feudal lords commuted villein services into cash payments. They introduced various dues, took part in aggressive wars, and when these sources were not sufficient, they turned again to the exploitation of their villeins, and were even ready to pillage their own country. The oppression of the peasants increased

⁵ M. Małowist: *Zagadnienie kryzysu feudalizmu w XIV i XV wieku w świetle najnowszych badań*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny”, R. LX, 1953, nr 1 and E. Maleczyńska: *Ruch husycki w Czechach i w Polsce*, Warszawa 1959, Chapter I „Zagadnienie kryzysu feudalizmu w Europie w XIV i XV w.”

⁶ M. Małowist: *Studia z dziejów rzemiosła w okresie kryzysu feudalizmu w zachodniej Europie w XIV i XV wieku*, Warszawa 1954, p. 452.

as there was a general shortage of labour following ruinous wars and mortality from the Black Death.

What made the economic situation worse was the constant fluctuation of prices resulting from depreciation of money. How frequent the changes of currency were can be seen from the example of John the Good, King of France (1350—1364), who changed the value of the silver coin eighty-six times during his reign. Devaluing money was such a common device that the contemporaries came to regard it as something „worse than the Black Death or an invasion of the enemy”, and wished for money of fixed value — *denarius perpetuus*. The content of precious metals in money was decreased as a rule, Venetian ducats and florins being the only exceptions.⁷

Against the background of general confusion and hardship that became the lot of the whole Christian world only the towns situated on foreign trade routes were flourishing. This was true especially about the cities in North Italy, which controlled the world commerce in those days. Through their stores and trading stations along the coast of the Black Sea and in Egypt the cities kept connections between Northern Europe and the Russian lands, Turkistan, Persia, India and China. The economic prosperity of Northern Italy was so exceptional that it provided a sharp contrast for the generally stagnant life in European cities. After the middle of the fourteenth century cities closed their walls before new population flowing in from the country, and the guilds became lifeless organizations destined only to linger on in their self-destructive egoism.

The difficulties which Europe was facing were increased by a wave of peasant revolts and riots in cities that threatened the established social structure. The age of ferment that coincided with the Hundred Years' War was filled with a series of class conflicts.⁸

In Salonica sailors and craftsmen managed to impose their rule on the proprietary classes for ten years, from 1342 to 1352.

In 1358 the Parisian burgesses seized the control of the capital and supported the demands of the States General formulated in the Great March Ordinance. Townsmen were given arms to fight mercenaries prowling about the country. The king received sixty-seven articles, which demanded control of the royal officers and the participation of the States General in granting financial supplies as well as in

⁷ J. Kuliszer: *Powszechna historia gospodarcza Sredniowiecza i czasów nowożytnych*, Vol. I, Warszawa 1961, pp. 326—360.

⁸ P. Boissonade: *Life and Work in Medieval Europe (Fifth to Fifteenth Centuries)*, Book III, London 1949, pp. 279—336.

collecting and spending the taxes. Though the bourgeoisie of Paris suffered defeat, it won for a long time indisputable leadership in the French anti-feudal movements.

A little later there occurred clashes between the poor and the rich in centres of textile industry.

In the south of Europe Florence no longer manufactured cloth within the gild organization, but owing to the development of textile industry employed about thirty thousand workers at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century. Those poorly paid labourers — the *Ciampi* — succeeded in their struggle for a separate gild, a share in the administration of the commune, the right to appear in courts of justice independently of their employers and finally — division of their debts into parts to be paid in the course of twelve years. When the *Ciampi* passed from participating in the administration to the full exercising of their authority in 1378, their rule was overthrown after several weeks and followed by a despotic rule of the principate.

Some longer-lasting uprisings that were also spread over a wider area occurred in the North European centre of cloth manufacture — in Flanders. In 1379 the weavers and fullers of Ghent seized the rule of the city. Their example was soon followed by two other cities, Bruges and Ypres, where the city proletariat also rose against the rich. Yet Ghent retained the leadership in the long civil war remaining a symbol of the undaunted will of the insurgents.

The Flemish revolution was applauded by the people of Paris and Rouen; cries „*vive Gand*” resounded in the streets of these cities. A feeling of sympathy for city insurgents clearly increased when in 1382 the inhabitants of the French capital, armed with hatchets and leaden mallets seized from the store in the town-hall, became the masters of the city. From the weapons used by the rebels the uprising got its name — *la sédition des Maillotins*. Fearing connections between the Flemish and Parisian revolts the regents of the young King Charles VI decided to attack first the insurgent cities regarding them as the inspiration of the French riots. The French forces defeated the troops of the Flemish insurgents at Roosebecque to strike next at the Parisian Maillotins.

In 1413 Paris again became the theatre of war. An alliance between the intellectuals and the craftsmen triumphed briefly over feudalism. People from the University of Paris expanded in their programs the ideas of the Great March Ordinance issued fifty-six years earlier, while the city was ruled by the Gild of the Butchers.

Though uprisings in cities affected the feudal fabric considerably, yet the peasant revolts turned out to be a more serious threat to it. A wave of revolts was going over Europe; suppressed in one place they would revive in another with increased force. A sense of oppression and injustice drove the peasants to a desperate struggle. They fought against feudalism in Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, but the widest repercussions were produced by the peasant revolts in France, England and Bohemia.

In the spring of 1358 a hundred thousand armed peasants, contemptuously called the *Jaques*, wreaked their wrath on the nobles. They charged the knights with exploitation and made them responsible for the defeats suffered in the war with England. In the peasants' view the French knights could no longer claim a privileged position, because their cowardice in the war with the English invaders had disgraced them. At Meaux and Clermont the feudal nobles succeeded in breaking the opposition of the French peasants. The latter were crushed not so much owing to the power of the feudatories, as because they let themselves be fascinated by the idea of the noble monarch, who is able to restore just government when he is separated from his mean and greedy advisers.

The same conviction betrayed the English peasants in 1381, when they believed the deceitful promises of the king that in opposition to the ruling classes he would fulfil the desires of the peasants, i. e. abolish bondage, make all the Estates equal and divide Church lands.

While the hatred of the French peasantry was directed chiefly against the knights and nobles, the English peasants were fighting first of all against the rich ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The situation changed basically during the Hussite Wars. By then the peasants were already aware of the common interests of feudalism and Papacy, because their grasp of the situation had been developed during the struggle that had lasted for over ten years — from 1420 to 1431 — when they had to repel crusades sent to Bohemia by Rome and by the Germanic Emperor. They had lost all illusions about the good and just ruler, and wanted to destroy entirely the State and the Church to build on earth the Kingdom of God from the foundations, and to bring up people according to the principles of the Scriptures.

But feudalism was destined to be victorious, because it had its roots in the economic life, while the forces that were attacking it were neither strong enough nor consolidated. The revolutionary movements in cities viewed peasant revolts with hostility or at least with indifference. Class differences turned out to be stronger than the newly

formed national ties, and a desire for better living conditions — more real and familiar than a vague vision of power.

The decay of the internal unity of Christendom was specially alarming because there was a steadily increasing danger of Turkish invasions. Preoccupied with internal affairs Europe turned a deaf ear to voices calling to arms against the Turks. Though at the time of the victorious march of the Mongols in the middle of the thirteenth century the Turks withdrew to the mountains of Armenia, after less than a hundred years they again undertook the invasion of Asia Minor, to strike at Europe next. In 1352 the Turks settled on the first strip of European land seizing the fortress Tzympe on the Gallipoli Peninsula. From that moment they were moving steadily up the Balkans. Their victory over the Serbs at Kossovo (the Field of Blackbirds) in 1389 and the blow dealt at the crusade of European knighthood at Nikopolis in 1396 opened the way for them to Constantinople. As the fourteenth century was coming to its close the Turks were already ruling in the Balkans having reached the line of the Danube. Christian temples were open there only in the mountains of Albania, in Salonica and in Constantinople. When the fall of Constantinople seemed certain, the aggressive march of the Turks was temporarily stopped by the approach of the Mongol army of Tamerlane coming from Central Asia.

If the advance of the Mongols was as rapid as it was unexpected, the collapse of their power after the death of Tamerlane was equally sudden and surprising. Nothing could any longer keep the Turks from continuing their conquest of Europe. In 1453 they entered Constantinople, which they were to call the city of Islam — Istanbul. The city that had for centuries inspired admiration and envy — two inseparable feelings — now fell victim of the Turks.

A military power that threatened Christianity was thus established at the point where Europe and Asia met. The Turks began to control the routes of commerce leading beyond the Black Sea into the Far and Near East.

Fear swept over Europe. It was not wrath hurled down from the heights of imperial or papal throne, but a mortal fear that Christianity would be ruined. This is how Dlugosz wrote of Constantinople: „one of the two eyes of Christianity was torn out, and one of her hands cut off”.

The lethargy that followed the Turkish victories initiated in Europe a comparatively peaceful period which lasted several decades.

In a way the fall of Constantinople closed the age of ferment, the age of fluidity during which everything was only germinating, not

yet clear or ready, not yet born. The age that had witnessed the great tension and nervous activity was passing away, but it had also been the age of active attitude, the age which had no desire for contemplative wisdom.

University auditoria were places promoting the development of the programs of two main political currents in that unquiet epoch: religio-national opposition and the Conciliar Movement. The former was struggling against the feudal Church, the latter aimed at its reform. Both doctrines, however, derived from the continued decay and weakness of the Christian universalism.

At the same time in the Islamic world Ibn Khaldun was evolving a theory of state and society on the wreckage of the broken Arab universalism, the decay of which had preceded by several centuries the decline of Christian universalism.

While the two European doctrines found their expression in action and became an essential factor in the changes, the Arab doctrine resembles the situation observable in modern political thought where theories are more often worked out by thinkers.

II. RELIGIO-NATIONAL OPPOSITION

Names given to political doctrines characterize them as a rule only in a general way: they indicate the dominant tendency of the given current. The same qualification applies to the term „religio-national oppositon,” which denotes the process of emancipation of States from Papacy, the hard and slow breaking away from the conception of unity of the Christian world. This process went on gradually as states and nations became increasingly aware of their distinctness. Their aspirations found ideological expression in Wyclifism in England and Hussitism in Bohemia.

The fifty-year-long reign of Edward III (1327—1377) was a period of an awakening of national consciousness of the English.⁹ The causes of the process, however, did not remain the same throughout the period. Until the sixties of the fourteenth century national ambitions of the English were stirred up by the victories in France. The military successes shared alike by the knights and free yeomen who formed the ranks of the bowmen were the principal factor that inspired strong patriotic feelings. The last twenty-five years of Edward's reign, on the other hand, made a full realization of national distinctness harder to attain, because it

⁹ G. M. Trevelyan: *English Social History. A Survey of Six Centuries, Chaucer to Victoria*, London 1946, Introduction, pp. XI—XII.

was a period of serious financial difficulties. While England was short of money, needed continually for maintaining an army and building a fleet, and as a consequence could not keep sufficient control over the conquered districts of France, the great wealth of the Church contributed nothing to State expenses paying revenues only to the Apostolic See. Understandably voices of protest against papal intervention in English affairs and criticism of clerical privileges were listened to with approval. People began to question the traditionally accepted view that the Church should play the most important part in the Christian world. The clash between Church interests and State interests resulted in a conflict between universalist idea and the idea of nation and State.

Rome's interference in English affairs was considerable. The Pope gave England cardinals of his own nomination, generally foreigners, confirmed appointments to vacant bishoprics, imposed taxes on Church estates and collected them scrupulously through his collectors; finally, he had at his disposal a vast army of clerics. The threat of excommunication, used both in religious and in political matters, assured effectiveness to apostolical enactments.

Papal influence strengthened the privileged position of the clerics, who already had exceptional status in the country in economic, legal, political and social matters. They enjoyed special advantages in spite of the differences between the prelates and poor country parsons, and in spite of the antagonism between secular clergy and the orders who owed obedience only to the Pope.

The growing estates of the Church, many times as large as the king's own lands, were subject only to papal taxation. An attempt made by the House of Commons in 1371 to get a single payment of tax from Church estates for the Crown produced little result. In 1377 it was discovered that money exported to Rome was used to provide aid for the enemy of England.¹⁰

Economic independence of the Church was only one aspect of the exceptional status of the clerics. Owing to their education they managed the affairs of State being almost exclusive holders of government offices. In addition to that they enjoyed legal advantages. If the clergy committed any offence against the law, they were tried only in ecclesiastical courts, while those courts had the whole population under their jurisdiction in matters of matrimony and inheritance, and, what is more, they tried people to whom committing a sin had been proved.

¹⁰ *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, Ed. J. Strachey et al., London 1767, III, 19, 22, 23 pet. XXVII.

Yet what most distinguished the ecclesiastics in society was their sacral character. In the opinion of the people the right to administer sacraments, and even more — to grant absolution, also the miraculous power to change bread and wine into Christ's flesh and blood during Mass, gave the clerics heavenly attributes. Other things increased their distinction: their exclusive right to the study and exegesis of the Holy Scriptures, their knowledge of Latin and of the complicated ritual increased further the distance between themselves and the faithful.

The Pope's interference in the affairs of State and the independence of the clergy brought about understandable protests in the period of financial difficulties through which England was going. In 1371 the lay Estates petitioned in the House of Commons that churchmen should be deprived of all higher offices in the government and that Church property should be taken over by the Crown. The English poetry of the period is permeated by the atmosphere of criticism. Geoffrey Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* and even more William Langland in his allegorical poem *Piers Plowman* denounced the corruption of the upper classes without sparing the clergy.¹¹

While the men managing the affairs of State regarded with disfavour ecclesiastical estates which brought England no revenues, the faithful found the materialism of the clergy and the Church especially offensive. In the fourteenth century penance, indulgences, pilgrimages were commercialized to such an extent that each could be replaced by a definite sum of money.

After 1370 Oxford University became a flourishing centre from which criticism was directed against the Church. The university enjoyed both papal and royal privileges, and had thus favourable conditions for the clash of two conceptions, two opposed points of view — lay and ecclesiastic, one with the State at its centre, the other — with the papal authority uppermost. At first the learned controversy remained within the walls of the university where it engaged the attention of only a narrow circle of men, also, where it was conducted according to the rules of medieval disputes, and besides — in Latin.

For years differences of opinion arose whenever the problem of dominion was discussed there. Though the initial assumption that dominion comes from God was undisputed, the conclusions drawn from this differed. For papists only dominion received through the Church was justified; for their opponents the agency by which it was received did not matter much; they shifted the centre of gravity to the person

¹¹ M. Schlauch: *English Medieval Literature and Its Social Foundations*, Warszawa 1956, p. 201 et sqq.

of the ruler and were convinced that committing a grave sin makes him unfit to exercise power. In the middle of the fourteenth century an eminent Oxford theologian Richard Fitzralph applied this view to clergy asserting that mortal sin makes a priest unfit to perform sacerdotal functions. This thesis was to become the principal argument in the struggle against the churchmen, who, driven by desire for temporal gain, lived in the state of sin. After 1370 the Oxford discussions passed outside the university and the Oxonian masters became intellectual leaders of the opposition. Rallying round the person of John Wyclif (1325—1384) they criticised the abuses of the clergy not only from their professorial chairs but also from the pulpit, addressing the faithful in English — the tongue they all understood. The speakers were Lollards — poor priests. The name was applied even before Wyclif to those whose religious views differed from orthodox teaching. Later the Lollards were identified with Wyclifism. Following the example of their master they denounced the Church, whose organization was far removed from the examples shown in the Book. Their only authority was the Bible, which they translated into English thanks to the efforts of Wyclif and to his direct help. Removing the bar of the Latin tongue they made of the Bible a living book for all believers.

In 1371 Wyclif entered for the first time the arena of politics declaring that ecclesiastical property should be secularized and clerics removed from the government of State. By then he had become a distinguished Oxford scholar; the boldness and courage with which he defended national interests gained him recognition and disciples. He had the ability to link together the wisdom of a scholar and a sense of reality, theological learning and clarity of judgement, religion and the needs of his own country. „Two virtues”, he wrote, „be in mannes soule by which a man should be ruled: holynesse in mannes wille, and good cunning in his witt. Holynesse should put out sin, and good cunning should put out folly.”¹²

In 1374 he was a member of the royal commission sent to discuss with papal representatives the bestowal of ecclesiastical benefices. He soon sacrificed diplomatic career for political activity. The course of his life followed from the university through social agitation to heresy. His popularity can be measured by the defence offered him in 1377 by the people during the trial conducted against him at St. Paul's by the London episcopate. It was in that year that Pope Gregory XI sent to Oxford University a bull urging the arrest of Wyclif and handing him

¹² *The English Works of Wyclif hitherto Unprinted. On Confession*, Ed. F. D. Matthew, Early English Text Society, 1880, p. 327.

over to the Bishop of London. In the schedule of Wyclif's errors it was mentioned that he attacked private property and was thus undermining the established order of Church and State.

The Great Schism, which began in 1378, weakened the authority of the Apostolic See so much in England that Gregory's bull was disregarded; what is more, Wyclif became a national hero who defended England against Rome, defended the State against the Church. A few years before his death he withdrew from political life, remained incumbent of Lutterworth and worked at his doctrine, which he expounded most succinctly and systematically in the *Triologus* — an allegorical discussion between Truth, Falsehood and Wisdom.

Wyclif's conception of State organization was gradually changing and becoming more radical, but criticism of Papacy and of the unjustified privileges of the clergy were always at its core. These two problems were the main theme of his numerous works and the object of his political activity.

As Wyclif went on writing works his attitude to Papacy was becoming increasingly uncompromising. At first he opposed Rome's interference in State affairs and criticised the papal collectors who were raising taxes in England for the Apostolic See. At the end of his life he already wanted a State-controlled Church, without Pope or hierarchy. He rejected the doctrine that England is a part of the Christian commonwealth governed by the Pope, and advocated the opposite conception — that of the full independence of the State. When the King's Council asked him whether England could, in the interest of the State, forbid payments to Rome, his reply was uncompromising: he said that the law of Christ contained in the Gospels as well as conscience and common sense indicate decisions in keeping with the interest of England.

He realized that the threat of papal anathema increased the political influence of the Church and argued that in worldly matters it was meaningless. He considered such anathema unjust and therefore invalid, and though he admitted that it could sometimes inspire fear and even cause some damage, he maintained that it had no real significance.¹³

Another blow was dealt at excommunication by his theory of predestination, according to which people are either born in the state of Grace and are predestined for salvation, or in the state of sin and are foreknown for damnation.¹⁴ Deeds and not acceptance of dogmas distin-

¹³ J. Wyclif: *De civili dominio*: vol. I, Ed. R. L. Poole, Wyclif Society Publications, 1885, 277—8.

¹⁴ J. Wyclif: *De ecclesia*, Ed. J. Loserth, Wyclif Society Publications, 1886, I, V, VI.

guish the elect from the damned, hence an anathema imposed by a sinful Pope is of dubious value.

On the one hand the theory of predestination undermined the established system of the remission of sins, which became doubtful in view of the decrees of Providence; on the other hand — the theory provided ground for a new conception of Church without a Pope or hierarchy.¹⁵ The elect, i. e. those predestined for salvation, compose the Church whose head is Christ himself. „If thou say that Christ's Church must have a head here in earth,” Wyclif wrote, „sooth it is, for Christ is head, that must be here with his Church unto the day of doom.”¹⁶ In order to be saved the Church must get rid of the Pope and the over-developed hierarchy and retain only the priests who have under their immediate care communities of the faithful. The institutional character of Church hierarchy, foreign to the spirit of the Holy Writ, and the introduction of sacraments together with elaborate ritual separated man from God. Wyclif found his ideal in poor humble priests who were teaching the truths of the Gospels in simple language. He argued that the Holy Writ does not in any way justify the exceptional position of the clergy, whether financial, political, legal or social.

Wyclif's demand of the full disendowment of Church property was preceded by a general discussion on possession. Since everything belongs to God, then only the righteous can hold goods, while the sinful have no right to possession. For practical purposes, however, both the possession of the sinful and their lordship have to be tolerated.¹⁷ It is not unlikely that the conclusions of the Oxonian master influenced the formulation of communist ideas propagated during the Peasant Revolt, though Wyclif himself rejected this interpretation.

Arguments for secularization of Church property were found in the Gospels and in the political situation. Wyclif realized that the great wealth of the Church could result in a complete subjection of the State to the clergy.¹⁸ In order to protect independence of the State he postulated dissolution of monasteries, which were autonomous organizations controlled only by the Pope. „Merchants and warriors”, he wrote, „sometimes cause great loss to the commonwealth, but they are also

¹⁵ For the consequences of predestination in Wyclif's doctrine see K. B. McFarlane: *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Non-conformity*, 1952, p. 91 et sqq.

¹⁶ *Selected English Works of Wyclif*, Ed. T. Arnold, Oxford 1871, III, 342.

¹⁷ J. Wyclif: *De civili dominio*, op. cit. 42, 96, 101, 199, 201.

¹⁸ *The English Works of Wyclif hitherto Unprinted*, op. cit., 368 et sqq.

a source of great gain, whereas monks are a continual loss." ¹⁹ He wanted ecclesiastical and monastic estates to be taken over by the poorer knights to diminish in this way the burdens of the peasants. Also, the knights enriched by former ecclesiastical property were to pay higher taxes that would be spent on the maintenance of additional military forces. ²⁰

Finally, Wyclif rejected the medieval idea of the superiority of contemplative life over active life and made this another argument for the dissolution of monasteries. He regarded life of contemplation as false piety, while active life was for him a measure of man's true worth. ²¹

But when he came to deal with the political and legal privileges of churchmen, he did not need many arguments, because to papal doctrine he opposed the idea of a national Church, controlled by the State. The problem is discussed in his treatise *De officio regis*, where he argued that the Church, incapable of self-improvement, must be protected and supervised by the State. The monarch was to be given legal superintendence of clerical education and jurisdiction over the clergy; he was also to give cures as well as to recall priests. To keep a clear division between religious and secular matters Wyclif declared that no man had a right to hold a temporal and an ecclesiastical office simultaneously. When in 1381 the rebels beheaded the English Primate, Simon of Sudbury, who had also been the Chancellor, Wyclif took the opportunity to remark that the prelate had sinned by holding an ecclesiastical and a temporal office.

While the unique place of the clergy in economic, political and legal life was the result of the social balance of power, their social privileges were the consequence of the generally accepted Christian dogmas and liturgy. Sacraments and rites created in the Church an aura of holiness around the clerics; this referred specially to the remitting of sins by the priest during confession and to transubstantiation performed during Mass. Wyclif advocated, first of all, a public confession; he regarded the remission of sins as unfounded, since nobody can be certain that God forgave him his sins. Further, he asked the disturbing question, which he himself did not answer: can the change of attributes happening during Mass, when the priest announces transubstantiation of bread

¹⁹ J. Wyclif: *De blasphemia*, Ed. M. Dziewicki, Wyclif Society Publications, 1894, 188 et sqq.

²⁰ J. Wyclif: *Triologus*, Ed. Lechler, Oxford 1869, IV, XIX.

²¹ *The English Works of Wyclif hitherto Unprinted. De officio pastoralis*, op. cit., 429.

and wine into Christ's flesh and blood, really take place without the corresponding change in substance?

Wyclif wanted his priests to lead simple, exemplary life and to teach and propagate unceasingly the principles of the Holy Scriptures. He entirely rejected ceremony, recommending to all the study of the Bible which was translated into English by his closest disciples.²² He argued that „An unlearned man with God's grace does more for the Church than many graduates.”²³

For Wyclif's doctrine the moment of crisis came in 1381 when armed peasants rose against fiscal oppression and villein services were re-established by the famous *Statutes of Labourers* of 1349. The feudal lords were convinced that they had a hereditary right to claim field services from their villeins and that this right was confirmed by history. The peasants, on the other hand, believed their poor priests who taught that the past contained the proof of their — the peasants' — freedom, since „When Adam delved and Evé span who was then a gentleman?”

A desire for freedom and independence, and even more — unconditional condemnation of bondage dominated among the slogans of the rebels. Radical peasants went even further and demanded equality of property. They readily understood the words of John Ball who said: „My good friends, things cannot go well in England, nor ever will, until everything shall be in common; when there shall be neither vassal nor lord and all distinctions levelled... And for what reason do they thus hold us in bondage? Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve?... It is from our labour they have wherewith to support their pomp. We are called slaves, and if we do not perform our services we are beaten.”²⁴

In June of 1381 John Ball, released by the rebels from the king's prison, made a speech at Blackheath; he postulated in that speech not only economical equality but also the overthrowing of English monarchy and establishing instead a heptarchy — i. e. seven kingdoms.²⁵

In face of such danger the antagonism between Church and State disappeared, and the alliance of the two resulted in a bloody suppression of the revolt. Wyclif's doctrine came to be regarded as dangerous

²² M. Deanesly: *The Lollard Bible and other Mediaeval Biblical Versions*, Cambridge 1920.

²³ *The English Works of Wyclif hitherto Unprinted. De officio pastoralis*, op. cit., 428.

²⁴ J. Froissart: *Chronicle*, English transl. by Johnes, 1804, II, 135.

²⁵ G. M. Trevelyan: (*England in the Age of Wycliffe*, London, 1948, pp. 224, 239) thinks that as the rebels were negotiating with the king, they could not possibly attempt to overthrow monarchy.

heresy, and henceforward its adherents were to be persecuted both by Church and State. In 1382 came the official condemnation of the Lollards. Oxford University got under the control of the Church; lecturing on Wyclif's doctrine was forbidden, even the possession of his works was a punishable offence. A statute of 1401 *De Heretico Comburendo* made it a duty of the civil authority to burn obstinate Lollards on whom a sentence had been passed in ecclesiastical courts.

The epilogue of the religio-national opposition in England came in 1417 with the martyrdom of John Oldcastle, who at the head of several thousand armed Lollards had attempted to overthrow the monarchy.

In the spring of 1428 Church authorities ordered the bones of Wyclif to be cast out of his grave in Lutterworth and burnt, and the ashes to be scattered.

But the condemnation of this doctrine did not bring its history to an end; it was destined to have a splendid renaissance among Bohemian bourgeoisie. Wyclif's ideas were reaching Bohemia through different channels. In 1382 King of England, Richard III, married Anne, sister of the Bohemian King Wenceslas IV. The marriage, concluded for the sake of strengthening the anti-French alliance, had an unintended result, it brought about the penetration of Wyclifism into the queen's country. In 1388 a scholarship was established for Czechs studying in Oxford. At the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries the circle of Oxford heretics included for two years Master Jerome of Prague, one of the most devoted friends of Hus. In those days heretics exiled from England were arriving in Bohemia and young Hus was studying and copying diligently the works of Wyclif. Again in the first decade of the fifteenth century ideological contacts with the English heretics became more animated as a result of fervent discussions on the English heresy conducted at Prague University. Masters were sent then to Oxford and Braybrooke to copy Wyclif's writings. In 1406 a young Oxford master, Peter Payne, sent Hus a letter under the university seal to express enthusiasm for the activity of the Czech reformer. Seven years later the same Peter Payne was to leave Oxford driven out by persecution, and was to offer his knowledge, strength and life in the cause of his Czech friends. In September 1410 John Oldcastle and Richard Wyche, leaders of the persecuted English Wyclifists, wrote to express their esteem for the Czechs struggling against the Church of Rome; this came as a kind

of reply to the vehement attack made by Dietrich of Niem in his tract *Contra damnatos Viclifistas Pragae*.²⁶

Wyclif's ideas were reaching Prague at a time when social conflicts accumulating there signalled an approaching storm. At the end of the fourteenth and early in the fifteenth century feudal Bohemia felt the consequences of the rapid spread of pecuniary economy. Considerable profits were derived from mediating in the commerce between West and East Europe; other sources of gain were: well-developed cloth manufacture, rich silver mines, expanding mining of tin and iron. Yet it was only a small section of the population that grew rich, increasing at the same time the exploitation of a vast majority of society.²⁷

In addition to it there was serious trouble with nationalities in Bohemia. The long-lasting influx of Germans into Bohemia brought about a split in the ethnical unity of the country. Alongside the original population there settled down Germans who soon had a privileged place in the country. They held higher offices in Church administration; they advocated feudal exploitation of the peasants, and managed the wealth of the Church; they gathered in their hands half the landed property of the country; they composed the ranks of city patriciate that took small account of the Czech craftsmen and tradesmen; they drove the native nobles out of offices and posts at the king's court; finally, they managed Prague University established in 1348.

On account of this predominance of the Germans in economic, political and cultural life the social struggle in Bohemia had to be conducted under the banner of religio-national opposition. Czech opposition, however, was not a monolithic movement. The national principle made possible the formation of a broad front — one that included various classes of Czech society — often with conflicting interests.

Two separate camps, each with a different political doctrine, were dominant in the Czech movement; they acted together as long as national feelings were able to suppress their conflicts.

The Czech nobility and bourgeoisie sympathized with Wyclif's ideas and accepted the conception of tripartite society, including priests, whose care would be the salvation of souls, knights — to govern and defend the country, finally — the working people. Their demands amounted to a change of proportions and privileges among social groups.

²⁶ For the connections between the Czechs and the English heretics see: F. M. Bartoš: *Husitství a cizina*, Praha 1931, p. 30 et seq.; K. B. McFarlane: *op. cit.*, pp. 146, 156—162; E. Męczińska: *Ruch husycki w Czechach i w Polsce*, Warszawa 1959, Chapter VI.

²⁷ J. Macek: *Husitské revoluční hnutí*, Praha 1952, p. 30 et seq.

They wanted above all a „cheap” Church. This camp found in Wyclif's doctrine excellent arguments against all privileges of the clergy. His doctrine was expressed in a general way by the „Four Articles of Prague” of 1420.

The first two articles contained these demands: the Word of God to be preached in Czech without hindrance and Communion to be administered in two kinds to laymen and priests alike. The demand to administer to all believers Communion in two kinds — „*sub utraque specie*” prompted a name for the camp of the nobility and bourgeoisie — the Utraquists. They were also called the Calixtins, as they made of the cup — calix — in which wine was served during Mass, a symbol of their struggle against the Catholic hierarchy.

The third article postulated secularization of ecclesiastical estates and life of genuine poverty for priests in agreement with the teaching of the Gospels.

Finally, the fourth article demanded mortal sins to be punished without regard for the sinner's state. This article was directed chiefly against ecclesiastics, because both simony and receiving money for religious services were regarded as mortal sins.²⁸

The „Four Articles of Prague” were variously interpreted. In reactionary conception they even opened the way to negotiations with Rome, when the faction of the nobility and the bourgeoisie were betraying the Hussite Movement.

In contrast to the nobles and burghers the camp of the peasants and the proletariat in which artisans played a decisive role remained virtually indifferent to the arguments of the Oxford master and his Czech followers. What appealed to them was the vision of the happy society which was to come after the defeat of the devil's rule in Church. They considered themselves to be God's elect, called by Him to cleanse the earth with sword of all evil; they were convinced that ascetic strictness of living, rejection of compromise in the fight, and unshaken belief would make the chiliastic prophecies come true and would soon open the way to the rule of Christ on earth.

The radical leaders of the opposition wanted to break with the existing social order; they aimed at overthrowing all politico-legal institutions and in their religious ecstasy gave biblical names to mountains and rivers. An example of it was the centre of the popular

²⁸ E. Maleczyńska: *op. cit.*, p. 388 et sqq., 412; *Archiv český čili staré písemné památky české a moravské*, Ed. F. Palacký, Praha 1844, vol. III, 213 et sqq. and *Ruch husycki w Polsce. Wybór tekstów źródłowych (do r. 1454)*, Ed. R. Heck. and E. Maleczyńska, Wrocław 1953, pp. 59—60.

Hussite movement, Mount Tabor in south Bohemia, which soon became famous. The chiliastic beliefs of the Taborites were akin to the prophecies of Joachim of Floris and the predictions of Cola di Rienzo, who, during his stay in Prague before his arrest in 1350, foretold that there would surely come an age of justice and universal peace. In the second decade there appeared in Flanders and Bohemia Beghards, who ardently desired the establishment of the millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth. In Bohemia there were also beliefs in a perfect political and social organization. Three hundred years earlier Kosmas of Prague had described political organization of old Bohemia when „arable fields and meadows and even spouses were common property like the rays of sunshine or the wetness of water.”²⁹ Memories of this happy period appear in *Maiestas Carolina*, the code of laws compiled under Charles IV (1346—1378), King of Bohemia and the Germanic Emperor.³⁰ In the second half of the fourteenth century a fiery preacher from Prague, John Milič exhorted priests to live in poverty and self-sacrifice in face of the approaching struggle against Antichrist.

The Czech people were thus in sympathy with the radical conception of the Taborites. What they wanted was political organization from the time before the original sin, free from inequality and physical suffering. The demand of absolute equality was followed by a rejection of all authority, differences of state, property and the dues and dependence that went together with it.

The radical doctrine of the Taborites could not stand the test of life. The hard fight of the Czechs against papal invaders required a disciplined army and good organization behind the lines. Tabor, at first ruled by extreme radicals, soon turned into a medieval town of craftsmen and its army into a compact and efficient body obeying the iron will of its great military commander, Jan Žižka. Equalitarianism in legal matters was replaced by the principle of absolute equality and discipline took the place of anarchic communism.

After the death of Jan Žižka in 1424, when the leadership was taken over by Prokop Holý (Prokop the Bald), commander, intellectual and diplomat, the doctrine of the Taborites underwent further transformation and came to resemble more the Four Articles of Prague. From the past the Taborites retained only the duty of unconditional fight for the divine cause, which assumed Messianic features. It was a period of splendid expeditions when the Taborites attempted to rouse

²⁹ Kosmas of Prague: *Chronica Boemorum*, lib. I, cap. III, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, vol. II.

³⁰ *Majestas Carolina*, Archiv český, III, 68.

nations outside Bohemia to fight against the feudal Church. In the course of eight years — from 1425 to 1433 — columns of Taborite waggons were crossing the countries of central Europe bringing along announcements of the victory of new truth.

The national doctrine of the Czechs could not yet cut itself off from religious thinking so characteristic of the men of those days. Hence all the politico-social problems of this doctrine revolved around faith and Church.

Those who spoke publicly in defence of the Czech tongue linked that cause with the fight against the privileged position of the churchmen, their luxurious living and their incomprehensible Latin. Such was the aim of Bethlehem Chapel, established in Prague in 1391. The chapel was the place where John Hus first appeared publicly to fight for the divine law, on behalf of which he demanded a just government both in the State and in the Church. Merciless to the magnates who acted against the interests of their own nation he said: „The Czechs are meaner than dogs and snakes, for a dog will defend the couch on which it sleeps, and a snake will do likewise; but we are oppressed by the Germans and endure it in silence.”³¹

Though Hus himself followed, in effect, the principle of Christian humility, yet those who were calling the people to arms found justification in his saying: „I know that, as Moses bids in the Old Testament to anybody who wants to defend the divine law to gird on a sword and be ready, so should we likewise gird on swords and wield them in defence of God's law.”³²

Similarly, the struggle between the Czechs and the Germans for influence at Prague University had the character of a religious conflict. The Germans favoured the orthodox views of Rome, while the Czechs were inclined to follow Wyclif. The year 1409 brought the Czechs an undivided rule at Prague University and John Hus — the office of the Rector.

The maturing of the national consciousness was not uninfluenced by the wavering — and sometimes even — friendly attitude of King Wenceslas IV (1378—1419) towards the Czechs. Deprived by the Electors of the imperial crown in 1400 he looked for support to Bohemia and if he did not openly favour, he at any rate tolerated, the national aspirations of his subjects.

The martyrdom of John Hus in Constance and — a year later — that of Jerome of Prague shocked Bohemia profoundly. The burning

³¹ Quoted after E. Maleczyńska: *Ruch husycki w Czechach...*, p. 276.

³² Quoted after J. Macek.: *op. cit.*, p. 45.

national feelings and an unshaken belief in the rightness of the cause, coupled with the brilliant strategy of the Taborite forces helped the Czechs to crush five successive crusades sent against them by Catholic Europe.

In view of the failure of the imperial and papal expeditions the only hope of defeating the Czechs was an internal division.

In 1433 the famous agreement was reached, known as the Compacts of Prague, between Rome and the Hussite burghers and nobility.

In 1434 class differences triumphed over national unity at Lipany, where the Czech bourgeoisie and nobility dealt a mortal blow at the Taborites.

In 1452 Tabor fell.

The Taborite ideas were echoed faintly in the doctrine of Peter Chelčický (1390—1460), theorist of the Unity of the Brotherhood. Proclaiming egalitarian principles he rejected property, state, law, thus negating theoretically the feudal doctrine of tripartite society. However, he simultaneously taught that an ideal society ought to be established without violence, through humility and self-perfection within the framework of the existing order. Such teaching was no longer a menace to the existing political organization. Those who had defeated the Taborites knew well enough that passive perfectionism would not revive revolutionary action.

III CONCILIAR MOVEMENT

After staying on the French soil for seventy-five years the cardinals again convened in Rome, where after the death of Gregory XI they elected the new Pope — an Italian — Urban V (1378—1388).

Yet too long had the papal Curia stayed in France, too close were its connections with the Capetians, too numerous were the Frenchmen in the College of Cardinals to make the return to Rome an easy matter. Indeed, soon after the election of Urban VI a group of cardinals left Rome, declared the election null and gave the highest ecclesiastical dignity to Clement VII (1378—1394).

Such was the beginning of the Great Schism, which lasted for almost forty years and was the period of double line in Papacy: the Roman and the Avignonese. There began bitter contention between the two rivals who were fighting for the papal tiara and questioning each other's right to supreme lordship. Christian Europe became divided into two obediences; by the side of the Church of Rome there existed the Avignonese Church. Mutual hostility of the Popes and their hurling anathemas against each other undermined the authority of both among

believers and aroused understandable doubts concerning the very institution of Papacy and its role in the Church.

The Hundred Years' War increased antagonism between nations and further promoted the split within the Church. An opinion was even advanced that the political division of Europe was the real cause of the Great Schism — „*Occasio schismatis et fomentum erat discordia inter regna*”³³. It was feared that the division of all believers into the adherents of Rome and those of Avignon might grow to the dimensions of the Eastern Schism. The desire for the restoration of unity in Christendom was universal; it was felt by the believers, by the hierarchy and — most keenly of all — by the people from the University of Paris.

It was there that the idea of convoking a General Council without papal consent was first put forward by Conrad of Gelnhausen and Henry of Langenstein, both of whom modelled themselves on the conciliar conceptions of Ockham. However, the conciliar ideas did not obtain theoretical grounding or wider recognition until they were expounded in the works of two successive Chancellors of the Sorbonne: Pierre d'Ailly and John Gerson.

The convocation of the council was not the only means devised to restore unity within the Church. Three different ways of bringing the Church out of its impasse were considered: the summoning of the General Council, the joint resignation of both Popes (*via cessionis*), or the settlement of the conflict by negotiations between Rome and Avignon (*via compromissi*). When negotiations proved a failure both Sacred Colleges decided to assemble the General Council at Pisa early in the spring of 1409. That decision was unprecedented and surprising both by its novelty and boldness. University circles found arguments for the convoking of the Council by interpreting canon law flexibly; the cardinals, on the other hand, found justification for this step in their unanimity, which they regarded as a sign of divine inspiration. Both groups were convinced that the General Council had the power to judge the Pope — „*habet iudicare papam*”.

In Pisa both rivalling Popes — the Avignonese Benedict XIII and the Roman Gregory XII — were solemnly deposed and a new Pope, Alexander V, was elected; when the latter died soon after, he was succeeded by John XXIII. The dethroned Popes repudiated the decisions of the Council and thus the Church remained divided with three Popes henceforth: one in Rome, another in Avignon and the third in Pisa.

³³ Quoted after E. F. Jacob: *Essays in the Conciliar Epoch*, Manchester 1953, p. 8.

Another Council was needed to restore unity within Church and owing to the efforts of the Western Emperor, Sigismund of Luxemburg, it was convoked by John XXIII in Constance in 1414.

The Council of Constance left inglorious memory of itself owing to its brutal trial of John Hus and Jerome of Prague, both of whom were burnt at the stake. Another memorable event of the Council was the conflict of the cardinals with John XXIII, who was accused of simony, tried and then deposed. Its last claim to fame is connected with its decree about the superiority of the Council over the Pope.

The Council had no precedent in the history of the Church; it was larger in size and longer in duration than any that had hitherto assembled. This was by no means surprising, because when the attempt made in Pisa to save the unity of the Church had failed, the new assembly seemed to be the last chance and every European country was interested in the proceedings of the Council. The Council deliberated for three years and a half, and when at its largest it included three patriarchs, twenty-nine cardinals, some two hundred bishops and archbishops, more than a hundred abbots and three hundred doctors representing the universities. For a short period Constance became the capital of the world. The number of strangers staying in the city in connection with conciliar affairs was over fifty thousand, and the city had to provide food and lodgings for all of them.³⁴

The presence of John XXIII at the Council did not give him predominance; the Council remained under the pressure of university groups, which forced their conceptions on the Pope. Contrary to the intention of John XXIII the Council conducted negotiations with the other two Popes, thus treating as equals all the three men aspiring to the highest dignity in Church. The Pope was also defeated on the question of new procedure to be adopted for the sessions of the Council. Hithero voting had been done traditionally, by counting the individual votes of the Fathers of the Council; while in the new procedure each national group — the German, the English, the French and the Italian — was to constitute a voting unit. Somewhat later the fifth „nation” — Spanish — was added.³⁵ The old procedure gave the greatest advantage to the Pope, who was supported by the large Italian representation at the Council, while voting by „nations” strengthened the position of his opponents. Thus the centre of gravity of the deliberations at Constance was shifted to the „nations”, composed not

³⁴ See O. H. Brandt: *Ulrich von Richentals Chronik des Konzils zu Konstanz 1414—1418*, Voigtländers Quellen Bücher, Band 48, Leipzig n. d.

³⁵ Polish delegation was a part of the German „nation”.

only of bishops but also of representatives of the reigning houses and doctors representing universities — the two latter groups also having decisive votes. When all the „nations” had agreed on an issue, it was laid before the Council for approbation, which, however, was merely a formality.

To save his position John XXIII decided to desert the Council believing that he would thus break it up and that the Council, in accordance with canon law, would lose its validity if the Pope or his representative did not preside over its sessions, and if the decrees of the Council did not obtain papal approbation.

If the convocation of the Council at Pisa might be regarded as an exceptional measure devised to re-unite Christendom, then the assembly had to find theoretical ground for the principle declaring the supremacy of the Council over the Pope, the principle opposing the doctrine of the Caesarian power of Christ's successor. The Pope's desertion precipitated the solution of this problem of organization in favour of the Council.

University representatives, Pierre d'Ailly and John Gerson, as well as the Cardinal of Florence Francesco Zabarella, substantially assisted by Sigismund of Luxemburg, achieved a full victory of the conciliar principles at Constance. Gerson's ideas, especially, met with general approbation; in his view „*epikeia*” — flexible interpretation of canon law — was admissible if dictated by necessity, common sense and serious considerations. Gerson taught that „well comprehended rightness bids us to consider special circumstances which the legislator could not foresee”³⁶

The adherents of the conciliar principles came to regard *epikeia* as a magic word before which the immovable order of the Church receded.

Even before coming to Constance Gerson wrote a tract *De modis vivendi ac reformandi Ecclesiam in Concilio Generali*³⁷ in which he pointed out the dimorphism of the Church. One of the two forms, the Church Universal — *ecclesia universalis* — is under Christ's leadership and is composed equally of all believers. The Son of God governing that Church gives it perpetually full and living power as well as infallibility. It seems that in this matter Gerson was close to the views of his teacher Pierre d'Ailly, who thought that the Council should supervise the rule of the priests, because he admitted their fallibility regarding only the Church Universal as unerring. He wrote: „*Generale Concilium potest errare, non solum in facto, sed*

³⁶ J. Gerson: *Opera omnia*, II, Ed. E. Du Pin, Antwerp 1706, p. 120.

³⁷ J. Gerson: *op. cit.*, II, pp. 161—201.

etiam in iure, et quo magis est, in fide".³⁸ Gerson, likewise, ascribed infallibility only to the Church Universal. The other form of Church, which Gerson called the Church Apostolic, was, according to him, composed of all the priests with the Pope at their head. This other Church being a human and fallible institution is only an instrument of the Church Universal. Gerson thought that the Church Apostolic should be under the control of all believers, both spiritual and secular, composing the Church Universal. In case of sinful and heretical activity of the Church Apostolic all believers ought not only to demand its reform but also to deprive it of power.³⁹

After the desertion of John XXIII Gerson became the principal advocate and theorist of the conciliar doctrine which acquired the form of legal decree in the spring of 1415. This innovatory act was anticipated by the promulgation of the twelve theses formulated by the Chancellor of the Sorbonne at the request of the Council and Sigismund of Luxemburg. The theses state that Christ holds the highest office in Church and is inseparably bound to it, which assures the Church supernatural power. The Pope, on the other hand, has secondary powers and the connexion between him and the Church can be severed. Then the theses deal with the General Council which being the representative of the Church possesses the Church's rights. Hence the decisions of the Council are final and binding for all believers including the Pope. The twelfth and last thesis contains the statement that the General Council and the Provincial Councils are the only efficient instruments of Church reform.⁴⁰

Gerson's theses provided the basis for the famous decree „*Sacro-sancta*” passed in 1415. That decree laid down formally that the sovereignty of the Council of Constance came directly from God, that the Council represented the entire Church, that all the believers, including the Pope, owed it obedience and that its dissolution could only be decided by itself.⁴¹

In a speech delivered on the occasion of the departure of Sigismund of Luxemburg from Constance Gerson postulated the extension of the Council's competence to international affairs recognizing this institution as the supreme political organization able to make decisions and settle

³⁸ J. D. Mansi: *Sacrorum conciliorum et decretorum nova et amplissima collectio*, XXVII, Florence-Venice 1759—1798, p. 547.

³⁹ L. Tosti: *Geschichte des Konziliums von Konstanz*, Schaffhausen 1860, p. 209 et sqq.

⁴⁰ J. Gerson: *op. cit.*, II, pp. 201—206.

⁴¹ J. D. Mansi: *op. cit.*, XXVII, p. 590.

all international conflicts. On that occasion he also announced his view that ecclesiastical organization should be modelled after the political doctrine of Aristotle, that is, should combine in itself monarchy, aristocracy and timocracy; by timocracy he meant rightly understood democracy „*in qua populus bene dominatur*“.⁴²

Beside *Sacrosancta* the Council of Constance passed another significant decree, *Frequens*, which laid down that General Councils were to assemble periodically: the first after five years, the second seven years after the first, and the following at intervals of ten years.⁴³

Meanwhile time was becoming ripe for ending the Great Schism. The runaway Pope, John XXIII, fell into hands of the Council and was deposed after a trial. Of the remaining two rivals to the tiara one — Gregory XII — abdicated, and the other — Benedict XIII — was abandoned by his protectors and thus lost virtually all influence, so that his person no longer blocked the way to Church unity.

In 1417 the College of Cardinals, increased by representatives of the „nations“, elected the new Pope, Martin V (1417—1431) thus terminating the schism. The new Pope refused to carry out reform of the Church — a duty imposed on him at election — because he identified reform with the conciliar principles to which he was hostile. In 1418 he even expressed his dislike in public speaking against appeals from his decisions to the General Council and retracted only under pressure of the general opinion. He was also forced to conclude with several countries a new concordate in which he made small fiscal concessions, increased the share of secular authority in the conferring of ecclesiastical dignities, restricted the influence of the Church over secular courts of the countries. Further, the Pope was forced to fix the date of the next General Council in accordance with the decree passed at Constance. After the failure of two councils — of Pavia and of Siena — Martin V convoked the Council of Basle (1431—1449) which did not open its session till after his death. It was the most innovatory Council in the history of the Church, most consistent in realizing conciliar principles and most determined in its struggle against papal absolutism. It occasioned the clash of two doctrines, one of which was represented by the Fathers of the Council, the other — by Pope Eugenius IV (1431—1447), a fanatical advocate of ecclesiastical absolutism.

While the Council of Constance had achieved single leadership after years of schism, the Council of Basle launched a new kind of

⁴² J. Gerson: *op. cit.*, II, p. 273 et sqq.

⁴³ J. D. Mansi: *op. cit.*, XXVII, p. 1159 et sqq.

schism again bringing about a split in the Church. For beside the Pope exercising full power there was active the Council, whose decrees were meant to change the whole ecclesiastical organization in such a way as to assure itself predominance. It was a period when the conciliar principles, though interpreted in different ways, had ceased to be merely a subject of theoretical discussions and provided a practical conception of ecclesiastical organization already in the process of realization.

With the conflict between Eugenius IV and the Council growing more inflamed firm and unequivocal decisions were needed. It was not merely a struggle for power; the conflict revolved around the basic principles of ecclesiastical organization, for the very grounds and goals of time-honoured institutions were called in question.

One of the first acts of the new Pope was the issue of a bull dissolving the Council of Basle. But the Fathers of the Council did not break their deliberations, and taking the advantage of the friendly protection of secular rulers renewed the decrees of the Council of Constance asserting that the Council is superior to the Pope. The attempts of Eugenius IV at conciliation remained fruitless, the more so that in the autumn of 1433 he published widely the bull „*Deus novit*” asserting the uncompromising attitude of the Curia towards the Council. The bull denounced as heretical the statement that the Council is above the Pope and expressly demanded papal approbation for all the decrees of the Council. There, too, the Pope summoned secular rulers to resist the Conciliar Movement.

The negotiations conducted between the Council and the Hussites mitigated for a time the antagonism between Basle and the Roman Curia, the more so that the Czech heretics were a serious threat to the Church. Ecclesiastical dignitaries were more impressed by the military successes of the Taborites than they had formerly been at Constance by the wisdom and sanctity of John Hus and Jerome of Prague.

In the autumn of 1431 the representatives of the Hussites were invited to the Council; the possibility of reconciliation with the heretics was to be examined. After two days fifteen Czech delegates arrived under the leadership of Prokop Holy. All Europe was then watching the Council where discussions with the Hussites were conducted in an atmosphere of unaccustomed tolerance. A compromise was reached when two conciliar deputations sent to Bohemia reported that the Hussite camp was torn asunder by internal quarrels and disputes. An agreement known as *The Compacts of Prague* was concluded.

The epilogue of the compromise is well known: the Church rejoiced in the restoration of unity, and Bohemia was bleeding in a fratricidal war.

Independently of dealing with Hussitism the Council undertook to reform the Church „*in capite et in membris*”. A number of measures were proposed to transform the structure of the Church in which sovereignty was given to the General Council.⁴⁴ It was laid down that if the Papacy fell vacant when the Council was in session, the new Pope must be elected wherever it was sitting. The same rule was to apply to the nomination of cardinals. The Council declared itself the supreme authority in ecclesiastical State. Papal decisions dissolving the Council or changing the place of its meeting had to be validated by the Council. Decrees were passed against clerical concubinage, also against the abuse of the excommunication and the interdict; free elections of bishops and abbots were restored with the exclusion of intervention from the Apostolic See; the payments of taxes and dues to the Curia were restricted, and annates as well as fees for the bulls, confirmations, provisions, consecrations etc. — abolished. Moreover, the Council claimed full control over papal finances summoning all collectors of the Apostolic Chamber to write periodical reports.

In 1438 the Fathers decreed the suspension of the Pope and henceforward treated him as a heretic for rejecting the thesis of the superiority of the Council over the Pope, which had meanwhile been raised to the dignity of dogma. All these decrees were to fortify the conciliar idea and bury for ever papal absolutism. Meanwhile Eugenius had become the leading supporter of the projected union of the Greek Church with Rome and thus improved his position. Alarmed by the advance of the Turks the Eastern Church sought association with Rome hoping vainly for help from the West. In 1439 after long negotiations the decree *Laetentur Coeli* appeared; it promulgated the Union of the Eastern Church with the Latin Church and the primacy of the Pope. The Greek people repudiated the reconciliation of the two ecclesiastical hierarchies, nevertheless the conclusion of the union was regarded as a success of the Curialists and the Pope. Moreover, through diplomatic manoeuvres, concessions and promises the Pope managed to win over to his side the secular rulers, while the Council, transferred before its termination from Basle to Lausanne, was losing influence.

⁴⁴ For the decrees of the Council of Basle see C. J. von Hefele: *Conciliengeschichte*, vol. VII, Freiburg im Breisgau 1874, pp. 426—649.

The principle of papal absolutism came to triumph in Church. The Curialists who gained victory over the adherents of the conciliar doctrine now had indisputable predominance. They had the advantage of the long experience of papal rule assisted by the wisdom of generations of canonists. The adherents of the conciliar idea, on the other hand, had only one advantage: they were unanimous in their refusal to accept absolute monarchy claimed by the Pope. In the matter of positive program, however, they differed considerably. The Fathers of the Council of Basle held divergent views on the problem of ecclesiastical leadership. Some thought that the Pope was the head of the Church by divine right and could only be supervised by the Council. To others he was merely „*caput ministeriale*”, i. e. he was to execute functions appointed by the Council. In the opinion of still another group sovereignty rested with the bishops, who allotted functions to the Pope; this was a kind of federal conception. Lastly, not a few thought that Papacy was a human invention and concluded hence that the Church could entrust its executive power to a Council, a special committee or the College of Cardinals.⁴⁵

The leaders of the Council of Basle were already second generation of the upholders of conciliar principles. They were familiar with the opinions and arguments put forward in Constance, but at that time the conciliar idea had been regarded as an effective measure against the schism, while in Basle it was to be an instrument of ecclesiastical reform. There the Fathers were attempting to reverse the set of values hitherto regarded as unchangeable.

If the Council of Constance found its principal theorist in John Gerson, in Basle the same role was played by Nicholas of Cusa, who best expressed the ideals of that Council in his tract *De Concordantia Catholica*. He assumed as the basis of his argument the thesis of the universal „coincidence of opposites — *coincidentia oppositorum*”; he saw the source and essence of all existence in this coincidence of opposites. According to him God unites contraries in Himself being at the same time the absolute maximum and the absolute minimum, and the world is a combination of the elements of singleness and the elements of multiplicity, both of which, in turn, are reflected in man who is „*parvus mundus*”. Nicholas of Cusa also discerned coincidence of opposites in social matters convinced that there, too, „*Omnia enim concordantia differentiarum est*”. Lastly, his own life and work were the best

⁴⁵ For differences of opinion among the delegates to the Council of Basle see W. T. Waugh: *The Councils of Constance and Basle*, [in:] *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. VIII, Cambridge 1936, p. 25 et sqq.

instances of contradictions and he himself was in some way a symbol of the period of transition. He was a mystic and a forerunner of the mathematical and scientific outlook on life at the same time, a traditionalist and an innovator, a heretic and a cardinal, a determined leader and theorist of the conciliarists and later, when he went over to the curialists, its passionate enemy. And to him fell the writing of *De Concordantia catholica* — a tract which is the most classical item of conciliar literature. Nicholas of Cusa defended there his view that the unity of the Church expresses itself in the manifestation of differences and that dogmatism hinders all necessary and desirable change. For different views — he argued — can be reconciled with the idea of ecclesiastic unity, if they are expressed without dogmatic obstinacy.⁴⁶ Differences in rites do not threaten the unity either. Tolerance, so alien to Church, is according to the author of *De Concordantia* the best means to, and guarantee of, the unity of Christendom. Advocating tolerance he also wanted to see realization of the idea of representation in the structure of the Church and so he insisted that all offices in ecclesiastical hierarchy should be filled by election. He was also aware that the narrower the circle of persons the better the elected represent the electors, and was consequently convinced that the Pope represents the Church Universal only symbolically. To complement or explain his emphasis on tolerance and representation he asserted that common consent is necessary to justify the activity of the authorities. Natural law provides arguments for the need of such consent, without which, according to Nicholas of Cusa, neither government nor law can be just or right.⁴⁷

The history of the conciliar doctrine covers the time of the three Councils — of Pisa, Constance and Basle. Yet it would be misleading to restrict the doctrine to those three religious assemblies, to theological deliberations or to academic disputes, even though universities played an important part in its formation.⁴⁸

More than anything the conciliar doctrine inspired an unusually wide discussion of ecclesiastical organization, which spread over the entire Christian Europe. Discussions went on in dioceses, parishes,

⁴⁶ Nicholas of Cusa: *De concordantia catholica*, Ed. G. Kallen, Heidelberg 1939, p. 49.

⁴⁷ For the influence of Marsilio of Padua on the doctrine expressed in *De concordantia catholica* see P. E. Sigmund: *The Influence of Marsilius of Padua on 15th Century Conciliarism*, „Journal of the History of Ideas”, vol. XXIII, No. 3, 1962, p. 392 et sqq.

⁴⁸ The academic character of the conciliar ideas is specially emphasized by J. N. Figgis: *Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius: 1414—1625*, New York 1960, pp. 41—70.

university auditoria, at royal courts, in monasteries and in cities. As usual public opinion was more effectively moulded by news of current events than by learned treatises. The simultaneous reign of two or even three Popes released forces which transformed the conciliar doctrine into a social movement. The organization of higher ecclesiastical administration might appear remote from everyday life, but in reality it directly affected all believers through the heavy and ever-increasing papal taxation. The Conciliar Movement provided an opportunity for those who did not want to break away from the Church to evaluate its functioning critically. For a brief period dogmatism grew less rigid and the danger of regarding all doubt as heresy also diminished.

For a number of years the Christian society had watched the rivalry for power between Church administration and State administration. Marsilio of Padua and Wyclif were condemned by the Church because they had advocated transference of all power to State both in secular and in spiritual matters. Now people grouped in the conciliar camp strove to change ecclesiastical administration and to revise the principles of Church organization. In a general way it can be said that the conflict centred on the problem of sovereignty in the Church. The curialists thought that as Christ had given the keys to St. Peter, it was a sufficient justification of the monarchic conception of Papacy. The same conception was advocated by the canonists who produced numerous arguments for the papal *plenitudo potestatis*.

The conciliarists, on the other hand, referred to the words of St. Paul who wrote in a letter to Corinthians: „Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”⁴⁹ In the opinion of the adherents of the conciliar idea the interest of the Christian commonwealth was a criterion of the evaluation of ecclesiastical sovereignty. They upheld the principle „*Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus approbatur.*”

Conversely, the curialists believed in the sanctity and infallibility of the Pope and hence were not far from the thesis „*Quod principi placuit legis habet vigorem.*”

In search for arguments that would support the change of ecclesiastical organization the theorists of the Conciliar Movement turned to patterns from secular administration. Owing to them problems of ecclesiastical organization came to be discussed in politico-legal categories. They wanted the structure of the new Church to rest on the

⁴⁹ *Holy Bible* (King James Version), New York n. d., Corinthians III, 16, 17, New Testament p. 171.

principles of common consent and harmonious cooperation at the top of the hierarchy. Also, their thinking was affected in some measure by the national tendencies then coming to the surface.

The principle of common consent was a consequence — as was demonstrated by Nicholas of Cusa — of the validity of natural order, which was to protect people born free and equal from arbitrary rule and arbitrary legislation. Only the consent of the whole society or of its considerable majority (*valentior pars*) can guarantee justice of politico-legal institutions. Thus just rule differs from tyranny because the former is concerned about public welfare and seeks the approbation of society expressed as a rule by current customs.

The concept of common consent is also found in the work of Gerson who says in his *Sermo ad Regem Franciaie nomine universitatis Parisiensis* that monarchy exists only owing to general acceptance („*per communem hominum consensum*”) and that it is erroneous to assume that the monarch has unlimited rights. Gerson's postulate of common consent is not far removed from the feudal contract which formulated mutual rights and obligations of the subjects and the lords.⁵⁰

Similarly Zabarella expressed the opinion that society, or else its considerable majority is the source of power. Analysing the origins of authority Zabarella mentions three ways in which power can be acquired: through divine revelation, through the consent of the subjects, and through violence or usurpation. He adds, however, that social approbation is the basic and normal way of entrusting power.⁵¹

As it has been mentioned, of all the theorists of conciliarism Nicholas of Cusa expounded most thoroughly the principle of common consent in Book III of *De Concordantia Catholica*, arguing that government and law derive their power and authority from the consent of the whole society.

The medieval idea of common consent required virtually no more than passive approbation for the ruler and the law. It was an expression of the passive attitude of society that was seeking means of opposing tyranny and wilfulness. Later the principle of common consent was to give way to the principle of collective will, which was to mark the active attitude of a society demanding active participation in nominating rulers and determining policy. The former attitude looked back to the past and to tradition; the latter was to reflect the convictions of the bourgeoisie orientated towards the future.

⁵⁰ R. W. Carlyle, A. J. Carlyle: *A History of Mediaeval Political Theory in the West*, vol. VI, Edinburgh—London 1950, p. 159 et seq.

⁵¹ R. W. Carlyle, A. J. Carlyle: *op. cit.*, vol. VI, p. 166 et sqq.

The postulate of common consent was not the only weapon with which the theorists of the conciliar doctrine were fighting papal absolutism; the other was the principle of harmonious cooperation of the supreme ecclesiastical organs. The starting point of their reasoning was the current assumption that full sovereignty lies with the Church Universal, which, in turn, can entrust it to the General Council, the Pope or the College of Cardinals. All these three organs ought to act together in harmony in order to exercise power in the interest of all believers. But the conciliarists assumed at the same time that when the supreme organs do not cooperate — when *concordantia* disappears — the General Council represents best the attitude of the Church Universal.

If one disregards extremists most adherents of the conciliar doctrine were convinced that harmonious cooperation among supreme ecclesiastical organs is necessary. This principle was further recommended by the authority of Aristotle and his model government combining monarchy, aristocracy and elements of popular rule.

When the conciliar idea of harmonious cooperation of the supreme ecclesiastical organs was directed against papal absolutism, it anticipated mildly the future doctrine of division, balance and mutual control of authorities.

If politico-legal principles were applied by the theorists of conciliarism to ecclesiastical affairs quite consciously, the national tendencies were breaking into the Church without their intention determining all decrees and measures. In Constance the „nations” were accepted committees of the Council; in fact, they settled all problems, so that the plenary sessions remained merely solemn, official gatherings.

In Basle the division into „nations” was not formally adopted; instead members were grouped into four committees, each to deal with a different problem, but the „nations” still had a decisive voice both in the committees and in plenary sessions.

The Fathers of both Councils agreed to conclude concordats with those governments which guaranteed States some independence in ecclesiastical matters. The adherents of the conciliar doctrine concluded in fact that *Respublica Christiana* could not disregard national interests, which often clashed with narrowly understood religio-political unity of universal Church. In France centrifugal tendencies even gave rise to Gallicanism, a movement advocating considerable restriction of papal influence in internal policy. Gallicanism obtained legal formulation in 1438 in the so-called Pragmatic Sanction, which included the decrees of the Council of Basle into the constitutional principles of France.

Yet the victories of the curialists over the adherents of the conciliar doctrine put an end to the process of reform already afoot. A period of extreme centralism began. Soon the Church was to make an oracular announcement of the infallibility of its rulers and papal absolutism was to become a model of organization for European States.

IV CREATOR OF POLITICAL REALISM

Both the religio-social doctrine and the conciliar principles grew out of social movements which found their justification in complete decline of European universalism. Striving against the traditional institutions of the Church both currents were formulating their doctrines and giving them precision. The polemical character of both doctrines determined their range and power.

At the same time we find in Arabian countries a realistic theory of society evolved by Ibn Khaldun. The lapse of several centuries between the fall of the Arabian universalism and the work of Ibn Khaldun made it possible for him to view from a distance the changing fortunes of States and dynasties that arose and then crumbled on the wreckage of the Islamic empire.

While the European political thought of the period of transition is an immediate consequence of the declining universalism, the doctrine of Ibn Khaldun derives, in a way, from reflecting on the consequences of the shattered unity of the Arab world.

Already in the second half of the 10th century the Caliph of Baghdad had only illusory power over the Arab Empire stretching between Central Asia and the Atlantic. Gradually the provinces freed themselves from the control of the metropolis and formed a number of independent States ruled by ambitious dynasties. The disintegration of the Empire brought along with it, on the one hand, interstate conflicts and wars, but on the other it favoured the growth of many cultural and trade centres in the provinces. The Arabian universalism was rapidly breaking up owing to the decentralizing powers of the new States that aspired to become independent of the caliphate, and also owing to the invasions of the nomadic tribes breaking in through the eastern and western borders of the Empire.

The first danger that came to threaten the Islamites was the Turkish invasions, but those — on the whole — caused little damage to the development of economic and cultural life. The Arabs managed even to form loyal and fearless military force of properly brought up and trained Mamluks who were originally Turkish slaves. Only the Mongol invasions that came in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

crushed the cultural centres and trade centres in the eastern territories of Islam stretching between Turkistan and the Mediterranean Sea.

In the west disturbances were caused by the nomadic tribes of the Berbers. After a brief period of harmony when the Berbers invaded Spain together with the Arabs, from allies they became enemies of Islam. Their attacks drained the strength of the Arabs and led to political instability in North Africa which helped to push the Arabs gradually out of the Pyrenean Peninsula. Owing to the belligerence of the Berbers new States were forming and disappearing again in North Africa between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries; the dynasties that ruled those states were changing but most of them sought to justify their power by religious considerations.⁵²

Both the dynasty of Almoravides (1038—1145) and that of Almohades (1130—1269) came to power in this way. The history of these two dynasties provided material for Ibn Khaldun's theoretical conclusions.

After the fall of the State of Almohades three new dynasties began to share power over North Africa: the Hafsids ruled over Tunisia (1228—1554), the Abd-el-Wahids in Tlemçen (1239—1554) and the Marinids in Morocco. Lastly, in Spain, where the Arabs managed to keep possession of only a small strip of land, ruled the Nasrid dynasty, which survived until 1492 owing to their resilient policy and the superior geographical situation of Grenada.

Ibn Khaldun played an active and important role in the political life of these four States. In his career holding highest offices alternated with dire failure; he kept on entering the service of a new ruler after falling out of favour with the former one, he even knew life in prison. It is indeed hard to believe that the wide knowledge and scholarly activities of this man were for him something incidental, a kind of margin of his energetic political activity. Ibn Khaldun must have suffered from inner dichotomy, for his political ambitions were conflicting with his passion for scholarly investigation.⁵³ He seems to have been the reverse of Plato's ideal of politician-philosopher, as he expressed, in one of his letters his readiness to give up active life for the life of contemplation. „May God help me”, he wrote, „to free myself from the fetters of hope and of political success... I would

⁵² A. Müller: *Der Islam im Morgen und Abendland*, II, Berlin 1885—1887, p. 667 et sqq.

⁵³ For the personality of Ibn Khaldun see the study by M. Syrier: *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Mysticism*, „Islamic Culture”, XXI, Hyderabad 1947, pp. 264—302.

much rather devote my life to knowledge, if I were only left in peace." ⁵⁴

However, his temperament, education and family traditions predisposed him to a political career. His ancestors had played an important part in the political life of Seville as long as the town was under Arab rule. After the victory of the Christians in Spain they settled in Tunis where Ibn Khaldun was born in 1332. It was there that he received a very good theological and philosophical education, and it was also there that he began his political career at the court of the Hafsid^s. Soon he offered his services to the Marinids ruling in Morocco, where he became involved in court intrigues and found himself in prison. The years 1362—1365 were of special importance in his life; serving at the court in Grenada he became acquainted for the first time with the Christian world when he was sent on diplomatic missions to the lost Seville. His extensive knowledge and a talent for mediation gained him fame and envy, friends and enemies, but above all they made him lead a very troubled life. After leaving Grenada he was successively in the service of the rulers of Bougie, Fez, Tlemçen. It was in this period, lasting several years, that he withdrew from political life. Staying in a lonely Berber fortress he made the first draft of his philosophy of history, designed as an introduction to a History of the World. It seems very probable that he wanted to discuss or else expound his conceptions in a renowned centre of scholarship and that this desire made him undertake a journey eastward. In 1383 he reached Cairo. He was dazzled by the wealth of the town and by its intellectual life. But in this new place he still acted in accordance with his nature and soon exchanged his professorship for the office of the supreme judge. An account has been preserved, written by Ibn Khaldun's own hand, of his meeting with Tamerlane in 1400 during the siege of Damascus. The grey-headed sage managed to gain the confidence of the untamed barbarian for whom he even prepared a description of Maghreb, but he did not succeed in saving the town.⁵⁵ After the fall of Damascus he returned to Cairo, where he died in 1406. Europe was not to hear of him until four hundred years later.

Ibn Khaldun's interests were very broad. We know from the titles on record — his preserved works are few — that he wrote treatises about theology, philosophy, law, arithmetic, logic. He gained fame and

⁵⁴ Quoted after M. K. Ayad: *Die Geschichts- und Gesellschaftslehre Ibn Halduns*, Forschungen zur Geschichts- und Gesellschaftslehre, H. 2, Stuttgart and Berlin 1930, p. 13.

⁵⁵ W. J. Fischel: *Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1952, pp. 29—48.

distinction chiefly as the author of an extant seven-volume history, *Kitab al-Ibar* ⁵⁶, of which he spoke to Tamerlane as of his *magnum opus*. Ibn Khaldun divided his history into three large parts. The first — *Muqāddima* (Introduction, *Prolegomena*) — is an exposition of the author's philosophy and methodology; the second, including volumes II to V, contains his universal history of the world; finally, the third, including the last two volumes, presents the history of the Berbers. *Muqāddima*, an introduction to the history of the world, is also a systematic statement of an entirely new theory of society.

For centuries the great work of Ibn Khaldun was unknown outside the Islamic world, but there it was treated with respect due to writings that contain profound political wisdom.

Europe discovered Ibn Khaldun in 1806 when Silvestre de Sacy published several fragments of his work.⁵⁷ Those who read him soon became aware of the true stature of the Arab thinker.⁵⁸ Ibn Khaldun's ideas began to arouse increasing interest, for few minds in social science had been as penetrating as his and few had had as keen a desire for knowledge. In 1858 E. Quatremère published *Muqāddima* in Arabic ⁵⁹, and soon the text was translated into French by W. McGucken de Slane.⁶⁰

Owing to the studies by F. E. Schulz, R. Flint, A. v. Kremer, L. Gumplowicz, nineteenth century scholarship recognized Ibn Khaldun as a thoroughly modern thinker, historian, philosopher and sociologist.⁶¹ In this century he has been advanced to the rank of the greatest thinkers of the world. A. J. Toynbee considers Ibn Khaldun the creator

⁵⁶ The full title of Ibn Khaldun's History in the translation of S. de Sacy is: *Le livre des exemples instructifs et le recueil des événements anciens et de ceux dont le souvenir s'est conservé concernant l'histoire des Arabes, des Persans, des Berbers et des nations contemporaines les plus puissantes* (Biographic Universelle, v. XXI, Paris 1818). Ibn Khaldun's work was published in Arabic in seven volumes by Skeikh Nasr al-Hūrīnī, Bulāq 1867—1868.

⁵⁷ S. de Sacy: *Chrestomathie arabe*, II, Paris 1806, pp. 401—573.

⁵⁸ N. Schmidt: *Ibn Khaldun, Historian, Sociologist and Philosopher*, New York 1930, pp. 1—8.

⁵⁹ *Les Prolegomènes d'Ebn Khaldoun*, Notices et Extraits, XVI, XVII, XVIII, Paris 1858.

⁶⁰ *Les Prolegomènes d'Ibn Khaldoun*, Notices et Extraits, XIX, XX, XXI, Paris 1863—1868. This edition was reprinted 1934—1938.

⁶¹ F. E. Schulz: *Ibn Khaldoun*, „Journal Asiatique”, VII, Paris 1825, pp. 213—226, 279—300; R. Flint: *History of the Philosophy of History*, Edinburgh 1893, pp. 157—171; A. v. Kremer: *Ibn Chaldun und seine Kulturgeschichte der islamischen Reiche*, Wien 1879; L. Gumplowicz: *Ibn Chaldun, socjolog arabski XIV wieku*, „Przegląd Filozoficzny”, No. IV, Warszawa 1898, pp. 45—62.

of „the greatest work of its kind.”⁶² R. Nicholson writes of him: „His intellectual descendants are the great medieval and modern historians...”⁶³ G. Sarton calls his work „one of the noblest and most impressive monuments of medieval thought.”⁶⁴

Ibn Khaldun's road to „new science”, as he termed his theory of society, must have been neither straight nor easy. In a world where everything that occurs is related to God and his plan to grant priority to sensuous cognition, to postulate comparison of statements with reality, to explain everything that happens by causal relationship and objective regularity is to develop an idea of the world opposing the accepted tradition. It seems that Ibn Khaldun's mediating nature and his avoidance of drastic decisions in life may to some extent explain his concessions to traditionalism. In any case, he was too sensible to cut himself off from tradition; he was rather trying to absorb it critically.

Starting with the established opinions of the past he admitted that theocracy (*siyasa diniya*) gave a full guarantee of attaining temporal and eternal happiness, and that the sacred law of Islam (*sarr'a*) had a superior position.⁶⁵ At the same time, however, to clear the way for true knowledge, he made a sharp distinction between sensuous cognition and contemplative or intuitive cognition. The former, according to Ibn Khaldun, belongs to ordinary people, the latter marks saints and prophets. Here, too, can be drawn a line of demarcation between science and religion.⁶⁶ Sense perceptions are the basis of cognition; they supply the mind with material for general ideas, but those ideas must be constantly controlled, constantly compared with reality and experience.⁶⁷ For the human mind has an obvious tendency, observable especially in the field of social sciences, to make hasty generalizations, which misrepresent the investigated facts and phenomena. Certainly, whatever is wrong in science comes from trying to reach eternal truths by pure abstraction, merely on the basis of dogma and with the exclusion of empiricism.⁶⁸ The variety and multiplicity of things in the world around us may be understood only through scientific cognition, which seeks

⁶² A. J. Toynbee: *A Study of History*, III, London 1934, p. 322.

⁶³ R. Nicholson: *A Literary History of the Arabs*, London 1923, p. 438.

⁶⁴ G. Sarton: *Introduction to the History of Science*, III, Baltimore 1948, p. 1775.

⁶⁵ E. I. J. Rosenthal: *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, Cambridge 1958, pp. 84—86.

⁶⁶ *Muqāddima* (French translation, quoted further as *Proleg.*) I, p. 200.

⁶⁷ *Proleg.*, II, p. 427; III, p. 232.

⁶⁸ *Proleg.*, III, p. 237, 279, 294.

support for its reasoning in sense perceptions and in empiricism, and which thus discovers the law that governs the world — the law of cause and effect. „Whatever happens in the world of reality,” Ibn Khaldun wrote, „whether it be a thing or an action, must have a cause, i. e. it must have been preceded by such occurrences from which it normally originates and which determines its existence.”⁶⁹ Necessity and universality of casual relationship bring about the regularity governing the world of things and phenomena, which, in turn, helps the human mind to understand the process of their changes. „If we observe this world and everything in it,” Ibn Khaldun wrote „we perceive the whole to be a closely knit system, in which everything is bound to everything else by the law of causality and in which there is a perfect order.”⁷⁰

Among phenomena and things the highest rank is given to man, or — more precisely — to human community. This Ibn Khaldun also tries to discuss in terms of cause and effect, to understand the origin, change and waning of definite human relations. In short, he wants to establish the regularity that determines those relations which he calls culture (*cumrān*). This constitutes the main object of „new science”, and its aim is to acquire „knowledge of the formation of human society, or, what is the same, of culture in its various conditions... like savagery, organized acting, sense of community, next understanding various kinds of superiority among human beings, which is the beginning of government, further still, knowledge of human activities and occupations, which are the source of crafts, sciences and arts; finally, knowledge of all changes that can affect the character of this culture.”⁷¹

Ibn Khaldun was convinced that the studies of history written before him were naive, sterile and full of mistakes, that they were haphazard collections of unrelated bits of information of no scientific value. The time-honoured custom of writing chronicles of the deeds of successive rulers had similarly very little value.⁷² In order to discover the real forces that govern human society, one ought to get rid of every bias and prejudice, overcome the subjectivity of historians, their naiveté and credulity and, above all, free oneself from the habit of taking appearances for reality.⁷³ The only remedy for the shortcomings of the science of society may be the „new science” — a study of culture. Hence the study of the varying form and meaning of human relationship

⁶⁹ *Proleg.*, III, p. 40.

⁷⁰ *Proleg.*, I, p. 196.

⁷¹ *Proleg.*, I, p. 71.

⁷² *Proleg.*, I, pp. 7, 65.

⁷³ *Proleg.*, I, p. 77.

in the past and the present is a worthy task for a statesman and a historian.

This was indeed an uncommon widening of the field of investigation. But only this approach, Ibn Khaldun wrote, would let „the reader see clearly how States were established,” and then „he will understand fully the conditions in the past generations and centuries and will even be able to form his judgement about the future.”⁷⁴ One ought to look beyond the vast and manifold material of history to perceive the principal forces which determine the regularity of events. In this way Ibn Khaldun arrived at conclusions concerning the essential factors that determine the form and meaning of human relationship, that is — in his view — the culture of society. One group of those factors should be considered separately; it is the group that includes factors affecting man independently of his will: the geophysical environment, in which human beings live. Ibn Khaldun divided the parts of the globe between the pole and the equator into seven zones and concluded that only the three middle zones offer suitable conditions for the development of culture. Within the boundaries of these areas the climate and the fertility of the soil influence considerably the bio-psychical constitution of man.⁷⁵

The second group of factors determining the character of culture comprises economic elements. They stand on the borderline between subjective and objective determinants of history, because the conditions of the environment determine the means of support, while work is the result of subjective motivation. Ibn Khaldun was fully aware that the manner in which means of sustenance are obtained determines the meaning and the form of social relations to a considerable extent.⁷⁶

The third group of factors determining culture includes mental characteristics of a society, above all the sense of unity (*asabiya*), for „with the help of this people protect and defend themselves, secure respect for their rights and carry out common resolutions.”⁷⁷ At first, the need to struggle for means of sustenance and the need of defence against dangers make association necessary. The bond of blood is then the basic factor that keeps the members of a community together.⁷⁸ As time passes other ties become important and then *asabiya* grows out of them. A sense of community ensues then from social relations, common

⁷⁴ *Proleg.*, I, p. 9.

⁷⁵ *Proleg.*, I, pp. 105, 168, 169.

⁷⁶ *Proleg.*, I, p. 254.

⁷⁷ *Proleg.*, I, p. 291.

⁷⁸ *Proleg.*, I, pp. 270—273.

experience, common suffering, work or education.⁷⁹ Though the sense of unity varies in intensity, yet it determines the political strength of a society and the energy of its development. Sense of unity is an element of order and inherent in it is respect for authority, which prevents any activity that would threaten the integrity of the society.

Ibn Khaldun's discussion of the dynamics and structure of society is closely connected with his realistic socio-political doctrine. The reader finds in his work neither speculation on man's social nature, nor an analysis of State institutions, nor evaluation of various kinds of government. He reveals the patience of a naturalist when he describes the social processes and changes which — like everything else in the world — are subject to specific laws of origin, growth and decline. The cycle of life and death — the universal necessity which sends death to everything that has come to existence, applies also to society. The processes of growth and decline bring about essential changes and make possible a division of the history of societies into periods.

Ibn Khaldun distinguished two great periods through which every society passes. The first is nomadic life, the second — settled life.⁸⁰ All relations between human beings are radically different in these two periods.

In the first period members of a society are kept together by blood bonds. Living close to nature people become rugged physically and morally. Solidarity in action is their rule, as is also mutual help.⁸¹ The authority that is accepted by the whole society is paramount; it derives its strength from the general support of the people. Economic life is restricted to the satisfaction of basic needs. Religion is an experience and not a study of dogma.

Transition to settled life marks the beginning of the phase of urban life (*hadāra*). The natural bonds between people are superseded by artificial ties such as the community of occupation, education, work etc.⁸² Authority, separated from society seeks to strengthen itself by the use of force and to gain support from hired soldiers and an army of paid officials.⁸³ While in the phase of nomadic life spontaneous

⁷⁹ *Proleg.*, I, p. 374.

⁸⁰ These distinctions are treated by Levine (J. Levine: *Ibn Khaldun, arabskiy sotsiolog XIV veka*, Novy Vostok, book 12, 1926, p. 244) as a basic and universal principle of the development of society, a principle that pervades the whole doctrine of Ibn Khaldun.

⁸¹ *Proleg.*, I, p. 269.

⁸² *Proleg.*, I, p. 374.

⁸³ For a full exposition of Ibn Khaldun's doctrine of state together with a selection of sources see E. Rosenthal: *Ibn Khaldun's Gedanken über den Staat*, München 1932.

obedience was the basis of the ruler's authority, in the phase of settled life the ruler „enslaves the subjects, that is makes them obedient by force, imposes taxes, sends envoys, who can defend the frontiers and acknowledges no power over himself.”⁸⁴

It is a period when desire for luxury motivates economic life and superfluity of goods creates conditions favourable to the development of crafts, arts and sciences. Religion ceases to be an experience and becomes an object of speculation and study. But above all the phase of settled life brings with it organization of the State which becomes a factor that brings order to mutual relations between people. The State is — as Ibn Khaldun puts it — a form in which a developed culture becomes manifest.⁸⁵ However, in this new stage of social life there are visible signs of future decadence. Luxury is accompanied by the exploitation of the poor and by the decrease of the moral strength of the population. Seeking larger income the ruler increases the dues of the citizens. Increased taxation makes the citizens less interested in their work and consequently brings about migrations out of the country. Increasing economic difficulties cause anxiety among hired soldiers; crafts, arts and sciences begin to decline. The provinces loosen their ties with the metropolis which stands helpless in face of invasions.

Ibn Khaldun's division of history into two periods: one of nomadic and one of settled life, led to his establishing a contrast between State and society. According to him in the first period social organization results from the principle of spontaneous unity and free acceptance of recognized authorities. In the second period the State functions with the help of the machinery of organized government, that has force at its disposal.

Against the background of the ancient and medieval doctrine this was an entirely new idea. In the conception of Plato and Aristotle the 'polis', or city-state, contained in it both the element of compulsion and of freedom — State and society. The medieval doctrine, again, understood social ties better than State ties, which were only just taking shape under the influence of national movements. At that time religion provided the dominant ties holding the faithful together, besides, members of the same estate also felt the common bond.⁸⁶ In contrast to this Ibn Khaldun's conception of two historical phases and of accompanying

⁸⁴ *Proleg.*, I, p. 381.

⁸⁵ *Proleg.*, II, pp. 299, 310.

⁸⁶ E. Barker: *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, Oxford 1961, p. 5, 13.

two kinds of organization: social organization and State organization is the basis of his cyclic theory.

Within the period of urban culture the State passes through five phases which mark the way from its rise until its disintegration.⁸⁷

The first phase is one of conquest and consolidation of power. The ruler gains the support of all the people who still regard unity and solidarity of action as their sacred duty.

In the second phase power becomes autocratic. The ruler strives to become the sole master of the state; he hires officials and tries to turn his family into a dynasty.

The third phase is the time of peace and acquisition of wealth. The luxurious living of the court, imitated by the subjects, supersedes the simplicity characteristic of the conquerors of the earlier period.

In the fourth phase the first sign of weakness can be discerned against the general background of self-satisfaction. The ruler, who seeks to strengthen his authority by the honourable tradition of his predecessors, pursues a policy of conciliation and compromise.

The fifth phase brings along with it the final collapse. The selfishness and pusillanimity of the ruler antagonize all his subjects. Exorbitant dues claimed by the State from the citizens injure economic enterprise. Growing economic difficulties increase political weakness.

The five phases cover the whole existence of a State from the rise of a dynasty until its fall. This period, which lasts about 120 years, covers the lives of three generations. Each of those generations has a different character in accordance with the changes in the way of living. „The differences between the cultural conditions of generations”, wrote Ibn Khaldun, „can be reduced to differences in the way of living.”⁸⁸

Political and economic decadence is a signal of the approaching end of the State. The fifth phase closes the historical cycle, making room for a new one. The fate of one society is fulfilled.

Ibn Khaldun had not access to a very wide range of historical facts. His theoretical conclusions were made on the basis of the history of the nomadic Berber tribes and the Arab states of North Africa, and those usually existed for a period shorter than a century and a half.⁸⁹ But in spite of the limitations of his material he managed to make many shrewd observations which were a part of his realistic thinking.

The doctrine of the Arab thinker has inspired a number of comparisons. Students of Ibn Khaldun's thought were looking there for

⁸⁷ *Proleg.*, I, pp. 350, 356 et sqq.

⁸⁸ *Proleg.*, I, p. 254.

⁸⁹ M. K. Ayaad: *op. cit.*, p. 149.

analogies with the realism of Machiavelli. The idea of historical cycles suggests a similarity to the conceptions of Vico. The emphasis on geophysical elements brings him near Montesquieu. Finally, his stressing of the connections between the economic life and politics seems to anticipate Marxism.

Such comparisons certainly make this deep and many-sided mind the more admirable, but on no account do they provide a basis for conjectures about possible relations between European political thought and the Arab doctrine which had long remained unknown in Europe.

The respect that the teaching of Ibn Khaldun inspires is due to its realism, correlation of everything to reality, use of concretes, dislike of speculation or dogmatic argument.

Presenting his conception of the State he excluded from consideration theocracy (*siyasa diniya*) that guaranteed eternal salvation to its citizens. Similarly, he left out ideal State (*siyasa madaniya*), which was an imaginary product of ancient philosophy. His interests revolve exclusively around the State created by man (*siyasa aqliya*), and the purpose of this State is to sustain order, to assure welfare to its citizens, to promote the development of crafts, and sciences. Rejecting visions of an ideal organization he sought models for his State neither in an idealized past nor in an imaginary future. He did not want from history a lesson in living but merely tried to explain reality with its help.

Ibn Khaldun knew that the laws determining social processes leave little room for the enterprise of eminent individuals. These laws so circumscribe divine omnipotence that even prophets cannot transcend them.⁹⁰ They diminish the State's power to mould the character of its citizens, who are already determined by environment. However, Ibn Khaldun did not regard with indifference the attitude of the subjects towards their ruler, the more so that in his view the essence of power resides in the relationship between the subjects and the ruler.⁹¹ He knew that rule supported by force breeds in the subjects distrust, hostility and a desire for a change of government. Hence the welfare of the State requires from the ruler patience, leniency, generosity and magnanimity in his dealings with his subjects.⁹²

In Ibn Khaldun's view governing is made easier when the subjects wish to imitate their rulers, to whom outstanding virtues are ascribed. He regarded this desire to follow the example set by people standing higher in the social hierarchy as a universal tendency; he noticed it in children's attitude towards their parents, in the pupils' attitude

⁹⁰ *Proleg.*, I, p. 328.

⁹¹ *Proleg.*, I, p. 382.

⁹² *Proleg.*, I, p. 298.

towards their teachers, and in the attitude of the subjects towards the ruling classes, of whom he said, quoting an old Arab proverb: „People profess the religion of their kings.”⁹³

Evaluating the ties between politics and economic life Ibn Khaldun revealed as much realism as in the other aspects of his thought. In his view the ruler, while performing political functions at the same time controls the market through his influence on the circulation of money, production of goods and determining taxes and dues. Similarly, the position of every social group within the framework of the State depends on the amount of its income, which, in turn, is the result of bringing under its own control other groups of society.⁹⁴

Ibn Khaldun perceived clearly that political position depends on the economic potential and that these two mutually affected forces are ultimately determined by the course of history. He knew that „unless the manner of government corresponds to the state of culture, the political activity is wrong.”⁹⁵

Realism, which Ibn Khaldun moulded into a scientific theory, was his philosophy of life and a faithful companion in his ups and downs. To his contemporaries it seemed to indicate a great political talent, and in the eyes of his posterity it is a sufficient title to glory.

STRESZCZENIE

Okres przypadający między połową wieku XIV i połową XV wieku, określany tradycyjnie „czasem wojny stuletniej” — przynosi ze sobą wielki przełom w Europie. Ze wzmożoną siłą ujawniały się wówczas sprzeczności ekonomiczne, polityczno-ustrojowe i ideologiczne. Społeczne konflikty wywoływały nie kończące się zbrojne walki chłopów i mieszczan z feudalami. Uwalniające się spod wpływów Rzymu państwa narodowe skutecznie osłabiają polityczną władzę Kościoła.

Na gruncie rozkładu i słabości uniwersalizmu chrześcijańskiego uformowały się dwie główne doktryny tego czasu: opozycja religijno-narodowa i idea soborowa. Pierwsza zwalczała feudalny Kościół, druga zmierzała do jego naprawy. Opozycja religijno-narodowa przeciwstawiła się jedności świata chrześcijańskiego i w miarę dojrzewania poczucia odrębności narodowej — wyraźniej dążyła do uniezależnienia państw od papieża. Ideowym wyrazem tych tendencji jest wiklifizm w Anglii i husytyzm w Czechach. Zwolennicy zaś doktryny soborowej

⁹³ *Proleg.*, I, pp. 59, 306, 307.

⁹⁴ *Proleg.*, II, pp. 340, 341.

⁹⁵ *Proleg.*, I, p. 454.

usiłowali doprowadzić do naprawy Kościoła od wewnątrz, przez zmianę jego struktury. Dzieje soborów w Konstancji i Bazylei ilustrują bezskuteczne, aczkolwiek żmudne usiłowania teoretyczne i praktyczne, aby ograniczyć absolutną władzę papieża na rzecz reprezentacyjnego i kolegialnego organu w Kościele.

W czasie kiedy w Europie ukształtowała się idea opozycji religijno-narodowej i doktryna soborowa — w świecie arabskim realistyczną teorię społeczeństwa stworzył Ibn Chaldun. Tak więc życie i twórczość tego myśliciela mają miejsce w kilka wieków po upadku uniwersalizmu arabskiego. Ibn Chaldun pierwszy w naukach społecznych żądał wszechstronnego uwzględniania związków przyczynowych, wykrywania obiektywnych prawidłowości i badania procesów społecznych w ich dynamice.

O ile europejska myśl polityczna czasu przełomu jest bezpośrednim następstwem upadającego uniwersalizmu, o tyle doktryna Ibn Chalduna jest pisana z dystansu wieków, będąc jakby naukową refleksją nad skutkami załamania jedności świata arabskiego.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Период, длившийся с половины XIV в. до половины XV в., называемый по традиции „временем столетней войны”, — это период большого перелома в Европе. В это время усиленно проявлялись экономические, политические и идеологические противоречия. Общественные конфликты вызывали многочисленные вооруженные столкновения крестьян и мещан с феодалами. Освободившиеся из под римского влияния национальные государства успешно ослабляли политическую власть костела.

В связи с ослаблением и разложением христианского универсализма сформировались две главные доктрины этого времени: религиозно-национальная оппозиция и идея собора. Первая боролась с феодальной церковью, вторая стремилась реформировать её. Религиозно-национальная оппозиция выступала против единства христианского мира и по мере созревания и осознания национальных различий сильнее стремились к тому, чтобы государства были независимыми от папы. Идеальным выражением этих тенденций был английский уиклифизм и чешский гуситизм. Сторонники идеи собора пытались исправить костёл путем внутренних реформ, путем изменения его структуры. История соборов в Констанце и Базеле иллюстрирует кропотливые, но безуспешные теоретические и практические попытки ограничения абсолютной власти папы и создания в костёле представительственного и коллегиального органа.

В то время, когда в Европе формировались идеи религиозно-национальной оппозиции и доктрина собора, в арабском мире реалистическую теорию общества создал Ibn Chaldun. Жизнь и деятельность этого мыслителя протекала спустя несколько веков после упадка арабского универсализма. Ibn Chaldun впервые в общественных науках требовал всестороннего рассмотрения причинных связей, вскрытия объективных закономерностей и исследования общественных процессов в их динамике.

Европейская политическая мысль переломного периода явилась непосредственным следствием упадка универсализма. Доктрина же Ibn Chalduna являлась обзором многих столетий и была своеобразным научным размышлением о последствиях упадка единства арабского мира.